

L E C T U R E S
O N T H E
C A T E C H I S M
O F T H E
C H U R C H o f E N G L A N D :
W I T H
A D I S C O U R S E
O N
C O N F I R M A T I O N .

By THOMAS SECKER, LL.D.
Late LORD ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY. *K*

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L E C T U R E

LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTION.

IN all Matters of Importance, every one that wants Information, should first seek for it, then attend to it: and the more our Happiness depends upon judging and acting right in any Case, the more Care and Pains we should take to qualify ourselves for both. Now the Happiness of all Persons depends beyond Comparison chiefly on being truly religious. For true Religion consists in three Things; reasonable Government of ourselves, good Behaviour towards our Fellow-creatures, and Dutifulness to our Maker: the Practice of which will give us, for the most Part, Health of Body and Ease of Mind, a comfortable Provision of Necessaries, and Peace with all around us; but however, will al-

ways secure to us, what is infinitely more valuable still, the Favour and Blessing of God ; who, on these Terms, will both watch over us continually with a fatherly Kindness in this Life, and bestow on us eternal Felicity in the next.

Since, therefore, whoever is religious must be happy, the great Concern of every one of us is to know and observe the Doctrines and Rules which Religion delivers. Now we all come into the World ignorant of these ; and our Faculties are so weak at first, and gain Strength so slowly ; and the Attention of our earlier Years to serious Things is so small ; that even were our Duty to comprehend no more than our own Reason could teach us, few, if any, would learn it sufficiently without Assistance ; and none so soon as they would need it. They would come out into a World full of Dangers, every Way unprepared for avoiding them ; would go wrong in the very Beginning of Life, perhaps fatally : at least would hurt, if they did not ruin themselves ; and make their Return into the right Path certainly difficult, and probably late.

But

LECTURE I. 3

But we must consider yet further, that Reason, were it improved to the utmost, cannot discover to us all that we are to believe and do : but a large and most important Part of it is to be learnt from the Revelation made to us in God's holy Word. And this, though perfectly well suited to the Purposes for which it was designed, yet being originally delivered at very distant Times, to very different Sorts of Persons, on very different Occasions ; and the several Articles of Faith and Precepts of Conduct, which it prescribes, not being collected and laid down methodically in any one Part of it, but dispersed with irregular Beauty through the whole, as the Riches of Nature are through the Creation ; the Informations of the more knowing must be in many Respects needful, to prepare the more ignorant for receiving the Benefits, of which they are capable from reading the Scripture. And particularly, giving them before-hand a summary and orderly View of the principal Points comprehended in it, will qualify them better than any other Thing to

discern its true Meaning, so far as is requisite, in each Part.

Therefore, both in what Reason of itself dictates, and what God hath added to it, Instruction is necessary, especially for Beginners. And indeed, as they are never left to find out by their own Abilities any other Sort of useful Knowledge, but always helped, if possible; it would be very strange, if, in the most important Kind, the same Care at least were not taken.

But besides enlightening the Ignorance of Persons, Instruction doth equal, if not greater, Service, by preventing or opposing their Prejudices and Partialities. From our tenderest Age we have our wrong Inclinations, and are very prone to form wrong Notions in Support of them; both which we are extremely backward to acknowledge, and very apt to model our Religion in such Manner as to leave Room for our Faults. Now right Explanations clearly delivered, and right Admonitions pressed home, in early Days, may preserve Persons from thus deceiving themselves, and guard them against future, as well as present Dangers.

Nay,

Nay, though slighted, and seemingly forgotten for a Time, they may still keep secretly such a Hold upon the Mind as will sooner or later bring those back, who would else never have seen, or never have owned, that they had lost their Way.

But a still further Advantage of Instruction is, that bringing frequently before Persons Eyes those Truths on which otherwise they would seldom reflect, though ever so much convinced of them, it keeps the Thoughts of their Duty continually at Hand, to resist the Temptations with which they are attacked. Thus their Lives and their Minds are insensibly formed to be such as they ought; and being thus *trained up in the Way wherein they should go*, there is great Hope, that *they will not afterwards depart from it*^a.

Nor doth Reason only, but Experience too, shew the Need of timely Institution in Piety and Virtue. For is it not visible, that principally for Want of it, Multitudes of unhappy Creatures, in all Ranks of Life, set out from the first in Sin, and follow it on as securely, as if it were the only Way

^a Prov. xxii. 6.

6 L E C T U R E I.

they had to take ; do unspeakable Mischief in the World, and utterly undo themselves, Body and Soul : whilst others, of no better natural Dispositions, but only better taught, are harmless and useful, esteemed and honoured, go through Life with Comfort, and meet Death with joyful Hope ? There are doubtless, in such Numbers, Exceptions on both Sides ; but this is undeniably the ordinary, the probable, the always to be expected Course of Things. Therefore seriously consider, will you despise religious Knowledge, and be like the former miserable Wretches ? or will you embrace it, and be happy with the latter, here and to Eternity ?

But it is not sufficient that you be willing to receive Instruction, unless they also, to whom that Care belongs, are willing to give it. Now the Care of giving it belongs to different Persons in different Cases. In the Case of Children, it usually belongs in a peculiar Degree to their Parents ; who, having been the Means of bringing them into the World, are most strongly bound to endeavour that their Being may prove a Benefit,

nefit, not a Cause of Lamentation to them; and having been endued by Heaven with tender Affections towards them, will be doubly Sinners againft them, if they are guilty of that worft of Cruelty, not teaching them their Duty: without which alfo, and it deserves a very ferious Confideration, they can no more hope for Comfort in them here, than for Acceptance with God hereafter. And therefore, both the Old Testament directed the Jews, to *teach their Children diligently the Words which God had commanded them*^b; and the New enjoins Christians to *bring up theirs in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*^c. Sometimes indeed Want of Leifure, sometimes of Knowledge and Ability, obliges Parents to commit Part, it may be a considerable one, of the Inftruction of their Children to other Perfons. But far from being ever difcharged of the whole Burthen, they muft always remember, that unlefs they affift and enforce what others endeavour, it will feldom produce any valuable Effect; and much lefs, if fome of the Things, which their Children hear them fay, and

^b Deut. vi. 6, 7.^c Ephes. vi. 4.

see them do almost every Day, are directly contrary to those, which they pretend they would have them believe and learn.

The Persons on whom usually this Care is devolved by Parents, are Masters and Mistresses of Schools, and afterwards Tutors in Colleges, who ought never to omit furnishing Children, amongst other Knowledge, plentifully with that which is the most necessary of all; but constantly to employ the Influence which they have on their Minds, and the Knowledge which they acquire of their Tempers, in exciting them to Good, and preserving them from Evil, as much as they can: And Parents ought first absolutely to require this of them, and then examine diligently from Time to Time whether it be done. But especially Masters and Mistresses of Charity-schools, which are founded purposely to give the Children of the Poor an early and deep Tincture of Religion and Virtue, should look upon it as by far their principal Business to teach them, not merely outward Observances and Forms of good Words, but such an inward Sense and Love of their Duty to God and Man, as may
secure

secure them, if possible, from that lamentable Depravity, into which the lower Part of the World is falling; and which it is highly the Interest of their Superiors, if they would but understand their Interest, to restrain and correct.

As the Care of Children belongs to their Parents and Teachers; so doth that of Servants to the Heads of the Families, in which they live. And therefore it is mentioned in Scripture by God himself, as a distinguishing Part of the Character of a good Man, *that he will command his Household to keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment*^a. For indeed it is a strong and a requisite Proof of Reverence to our Maker, as well as of Kindness to them, and Concern for our own Interest, to direct them in the Way of their Duty, or procure them the Direction of good Books and good Advice; to exhort them to the more private Exercises of Religion; to contrive Leisure for them to attend the appointed solemn ones, which is plainly one Part of *giving them*, as the Apostle requires, *what is just and equal*^c; and to see that

^a Gen. xviii. 19.

^c Col. iv. 1.

the Leisure, allowed them for that Purpose, be honestly so employed, and not abused.

For, after all, the most valuable Instruction for Servants, for Children, for all Persons, is the public one of the Church, which our Saviour himself hath promised to bless with his Presence^f. And therefore it is a Rule of inexpressible Moment: *Gather the People together; Men, Women, and Children, and thy Stranger that is within thy Gates: that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God; and observe to do all the Words of his Law: and that their Children, which have not known any Thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live*^g.

Whoever else may fail of doing their Duty, we the Ministers of Christ must not fail to *be instant in Season, and out of Season*^h; to feed the Young with *the sincere Milk of the Word*ⁱ, and *preach the Gospel to the Poor*^k. It is the peculiar Glory of Christianity, to have extended religious Instruction, of which but few partook at all before, and scarce any

^f Matth. xviii. 20. ^g Deut. xxxi. 12, 13. ^h 2 Tim. iv. 2.

ⁱ 1 Pet. ii. 2.

^k Matth. xi. 5.

in Purity, through all Ranks and Ages of Men and even Women. The first Converts to it were immediately formed into regular Societies and Assemblies; not only for the joint Worship of God, but the further *edifying of the Body of Christ*¹: in which good Work, some of course were stated Teachers, or, to use the Apostle's own Expression, *Catechizers in the Word*; others, taught or catechized^m. For catechizing signifies in Scripture, at large, instructing Persons in any Matter, but especially in Religion. And thus it is used, *Acts xviii. 25.* where you read, *This Man was instructed in the Way of the Lord*; and *Luke i. 4.* where again you read, *That thou mayest know the Certainty of those Things, wherein thou hast been instructed.* The original Word, in both Places, is *catechized*.

But as the different Advances of Persons in Knowledge made different Sorts of Instructions requisite; so in the primitive Church, different Sorts of Teachers were appointed to dispense it. And they who taught so much only of the Christian Doctrine, as might

¹ Eph. iv. 12,

^m Gal. vi. 6.

qualify

qualify the Hearers for Christian Communion, had the Name of Catechists appropriated to them: whose Teaching being usually, as was most convenient, in a great measure by Way of Question and Answer; the Name of Catechism hath now been long confined to such Instruction, as is given in that Form. But the Method of employing a particular Set of Men in that Work only, is in most Places laid aside. And I hope you will not be Losers, if they, who are appointed to the higher Ministries of the Church, attend to this also.

Under the Darkness of Popery almost all religious Instruction was neglected. *Very few, to use the Words of one of our Homilies, even of the most simple People, were taught the Lord's Prayer, the Articles of the Faith, or the ten Commandments, otherwise than in Latin, which they understood not*^a; so that one of the first necessary Steps taken towards the Reformation, in this Country, was a general Injunction, that Parents and Masters should first learn them in their own Tongue, then acquaint their Children and

^a Homily against Rebellion, Part 6.

Servants with them^o: which three main Branches of Christian Duty, comprehending the Sum of what we are to believe, to do, and to petition for, were soon after formed, with proper Explanations of each, into a Catechism. To this was added, in Process of Time, a brief Account of the two Sacraments; all together making up that very good, though still improveable, *Form of sound Words*^p, which we now use.

And that it may be used effectually, the Laws of the Land, both ecclesiastical and civil, require not only Ministers to instruct their Parishioners in it, but Parents, and Masters and Mistresses of Families, to send their Children and Servants to be instructed; meaning evidently, unless they made some other more convenient Provision to answer the same End. For promoting religious Knowledge and Practice is not only the express Design of all Church Government, but a Matter (would God it were well considered) of great Importance to the State also: since neither private Life can be happy, nor

^o See Wake's Dedication of his Commentary on the Church Catechism.

^p 2 Tim. i. 13.

the public Welfare secure for any long Time, without that Belief of the Doctrines and Observance of the Duties of Christianity, for which catechizing the young and ignorant lays the firmest Foundation.

It must be owned, the Catechism of our Church is, as it ought to be, so clear in the main, as to need but little explaining, all Things considered. But then it is also, as it ought to be, so short, as to leave much Room for setting forth the Particulars comprehended under its general Heads; for confirming both these by Reason and Scripture; and for imprinting the whole on the Consciences and Affections of the Learners. This therefore I shall endeavour to do, in the Sequel of these Discourses, as clearly and familiarly as I am able.

In the Nature of the Thing, nothing new or curious ought to have any Place in such an Exposition, as indeed such Matters ought to have little Place in any public Teaching of God's Word: but least of all, where only the plain fundamental Truths of our common Faith are to be taught, confirmed, and recommended in a plain Way. And yet, as

these Truths are of all others the most necessary ; the plainest Things, that can be said about them, may deserve the Attention of all Sorts of Persons ; especially as it is but too possible, that some of all Sorts may never have been taught sufficiently even the first Principles of Religion, and that many may by no Means have sufficiently retained, and considered since, what they learnt in their early Years ; but preserving scarce more in their Minds than the bare Words, if so much, may be little the better, if at all, for the Lessons of their Childhood. To which it might be added, that every one hath need, in a greater Degree or a less, if not to be informed, yet to be reminded and excited.

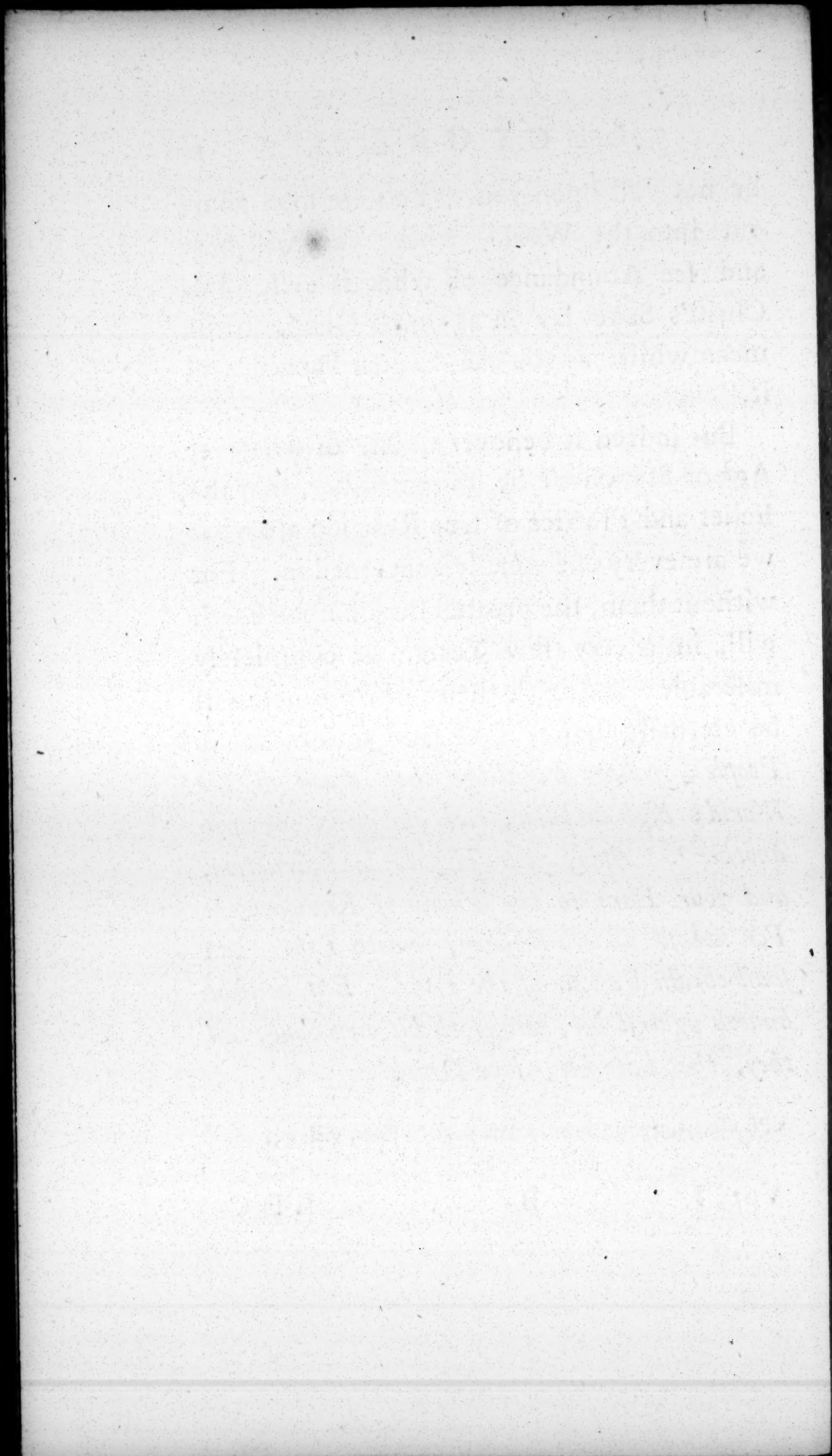
Let me beg therefore, that all who have Cause to hope they may receive Benefit, would attend when they are able : and that all who have Children or Servants would bring or send them. This is not a Day of Business. It ought not to be a Day of idle Amusements. It is appointed for the public Worship of God, and learning of his Will. This is one of the Hours of his Worship : it is that Part of the Day in which you are
most

most of you more at Liberty, than you are in any other. And what will you say for yourselves hereafter, if when you have the most intire Leisure, you chuse rather to do any thing or nothing, than to serve your Maker, and improve in the Knowledge of your Duty? Never was there more Danger of being infected with Evil of every Sort from Conversation in the World. Surely then you should endeavour to fortify yourselves, and those who belong to you, with proper Antidotes against it. And where will you find better, than in the House of God? But particularly I both charge and beg you, Children, to mark diligently what I shall say to you: for all that you learn by Rote will be of no Use, unless you learn also to understand it. The Exposition, which you are taught along with your Catechism, will help your Understanding very much, if you mind it as you ought: and what you will hear from me may be a yet further Help. For if there should be some Things in it above your Capacities, yet I shall endeavour to the best of my Power, that most Things may be easy and plain to you. And, I entreat you, take Care that they
be

be not lost upon you. You are soon going out into the World, where you will hear and see Abundance of what is evil. For Christ's Sake lay in as much Good, in the mean while, as you can, to guard you against it.

But indeed it behoves us all, of whatever Age or Station we be, to remember, that the Belief and Practice of true Religion are what we are every one equally concerned in. For without them, the greatest Person upon Earth will, in a very few Years, be completely miserable: and with them, the meanest will be eternally happy. *O hear ye this, all ye People; ponder it, all ye that dwell in the World; high and low, rich and poor, one with another^a. Apply your Hearts to Instruction, and your Ears to the Words of Knowledge^b. For whoso findeth Wisdom, findeth Life; and shall obtain Favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against her, wrongeth his own Soul: all they, that hate her, love Death^c.*

^a Pf. xlix. 1, 2. ^b Prov. xxiii. 12. ^c Prov. viii. 35, 36.



LECTURE II.

Privileges of Baptism.

THE Catechism of our Church begins, with a prudent Condescension and Familiarity, by asking the introductory Questions, *What is your Name*, and, *Who gave you this Name*: which lead very naturally the Person catechized to the Mention of his Baptism, at which Time it was given him. Not that giving a Name is any necessary Part of Baptism; but might have been done either before or afterwards, though it hath always been done then, as indeed it was likely that the first public Opportunity would be taken for that Purpose. But besides, it was no uncommon Thing in ancient Times, that when a Person entered into the Service of a new Master, he had a new Name bestowed on him. Whence perhaps the Jews might de-

rive the Practice of naming the Child, when it was circumcised ; it being then devoted to the Service of God. The first Christians, in Imitation of them, would of course do the same Thing, for the same Reason, when it was baptized : and no Wonder, that we continue the Practice. For it might be a very useful one, if Persons would but remember, what it tends to remind them of, that they were dedicated to Christ, when their Christian Name was given them ; and would make use of that Circumstance frequently to recollect those Promises, which were then solemnly made for them ; and which they have since confirmed, or are to confirm and make personally for themselves. Without performing these, we are Christians, not in Deed, but in Name only : and shall greatly dishonour that Name, while we bear it and boast of it.

Our baptismal Name is given us, not by our Parents, as we read in Scripture the Name of Jewish Children was, but by our Godfathers and Godmothers. And this Custom also may have a double Advantage. It may admonish them, that having conferred the Title of Christians upon us, they are bound

bound to endeavour, that we may behave worthily of it. And it may admonish us, that our Name having been given us by Persons, who were our Sureties, we are bound to make good their Engagement.

But the Office and Use of Godfathers will be considered under one of the following Questions. The Subject to be considered at present, though not fully, is Baptism. For this being our first Entrance into the Christian Church, by which we become intitled to certain Privileges, and obliged to certain Duties; religious Instruction begins very properly by teaching young Persons, what both of them are. And in order to recommend the Duties to us, the Privileges are mentioned first.

Not but that God hath an absolute Right to our Observance of his Laws, without informing us beforehand, what Benefit we shall reap from it. Surely it would be enough to know, that he is Lord and King of the whole Earth; and that all his Dealings with the Works of his Hands are just and reasonable. Our Business is to obey, and trust Him with the Consequences. But in great Mercy, to

encourage and attract his poor Creatures, he hath been pleased to enter into a Covenant, a gracious Agreement with Man: subjecting himself, as it were, to bestow certain Blessings on us, provided we perform certain Conditions. But though, in this Covenant, the Promises, made on his Part, flow from his own free Goodness; yet the Terms, required on ours, are Matter of necessary Obligation: and what was altogether voluntary in him, firmly binds us.^a

Now the Privileges, thus conditionally secured to us in Baptism, we find in our Catechism very fitly reduced to these three Heads: that the Person, who receives it, is *therein made a Member of Christ, a Child of God, and an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.*

I. The first, and Foundation of the others, is, that he is *made a Member of Christ.* This Figure of Speech all of you may not immediately understand: but when it is understood, you will perceive in it great Strength and Beauty. It presupposes, what we must be sensible of, more or less, that we are every

^a See *Waterland's* Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist, C. xi. P. 425.

one originally prone to Sin, and actually Sinners; liable thence to Punishment; and without Hope of preserving ourselves, by our own Strength, either from Guilt or from Misery. It further implies, what the Scripture clearly teaches, that Jesus Christ hath delivered us from both, in such Manner as shall hereafter be explained to you, on the most equitable Terms of our becoming his, by accepting him from the Hand of God for our Saviour, our Teacher, and our Lord. This Union to him, in order to receive these Benefits from him, our Catechism, in Conformity with the Language of holy Writ, compares with that of the Members of the Body to the Head. And how proper the Comparison is, will easily appear, by carrying it through the several Particulars, in which the Similitude holds.

As, in every living Creature, Perception and Motion proceed from the Head; so, to every Christian, Knowledge of God's Will, and Power to obey it, flow from Christ. As the Head governs and directs each Limb, so Christ is the Sovereign and Law-giver of each Believer. As being

joined to the Head makes the whole Body one animal Frame; so being joined to Christ makes the whole Number of Christians one spiritual Society. As Communication with the Head preserves our natural Life; so Communion with Christ supports our religious Life. He therefore is to the Church what the Head is to the Body: and each Person who belongs to the Church, is a Member of that Body, or, in the Language of the Catechism, *a Member of Christ*. For he, as St. Paul expresses it, *is the Head: from which all the Body, having Nourishment ministred, and knit together by Joints and Bands, increaseth with the Increase of God^b*.

And this Manner of speaking is frequently repeated in Scripture, as it well deserves; being not only, as you have seen, admirably fitted to represent the happy Relations, in which we stand to our Redeemer, but also to remind us of the Duties, which are derived from them: of the Honour and Obedience due to him, who is *Head over all Things to his Body, the Church^c*; of our continual Dependence on him, *since he is*

^b Col. ii. 19.

^c Ephef. i. 22, 23.

our Life^d; and of the Tenderneſs and Kindneſs, which we owe to our Fellow-Chriſtians, and they to us, being all united, through him, ſo intimately to each other. For ſince, as the Apoſtle argues, *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body*: as in the natural Body, *the Eye cannot ſay unto the Hand, I have no Need of thee*, nor any one Member to the reſt, I have no Need of you; but even the *more feeble and leſs honourable Members are neceſſary*^e: ſo in the ſpiritual Body, they, who in any Reſpect may ſeem to excel others, ought by no Means to deſpiſe them; ſince every good Chriſtian is, in his proper Degree and Place, both a valuable and an uſeful *Member of Chriſt*. And again: As, in the natural Body, there is a Connection and Sympathy of the ſeveral Parts; by which the good State of one preſerves the others in Health and Eaſe, or its bad State gives them Pain and Diſorder; ſo ſhould there be in the ſpiritual Body, and there is in all true Members of it, a mutual Caution not to do Harm to each other, and a mutual Deſire of each others

^d Col. iii. 4.^e 1 Cor. xii. 13, 21, 22, 23.

26 L E C T U R E II.

Benefit. *If one Member suffer, all the other Members should by a compassionate Temper suffer with it; and if one Member be honoured, all the rest should sincerely rejoice with it^f.* Think then, do you feel in your Hearts this good Disposition, as a Mark of being Members of Christ? If not, study to form yourselves to it without Delay.

2. The second Privilege of Baptism is, that by it *we are made the Children of God*; in a Sense and Manner, in which by Nature we are not so.

Our blessed Saviour indeed is called in Scripture *the only begotten Son of God*. Nor can the highest of Creatures claim God for his Father by the same Right, that he doth. But in a lower Sense, God is the Father of Angels and Men; whom he hath created in their several Degrees of Likeness to his own Image. *Adam*, our first Parent, was the Son of God by a strong Resemblance to his heavenly Father in original Uprightness. But as this Similitude was greatly obscured both in him and in his Descendants by the Fall, though preserved by the Covenant of the promised Seed from being utterly effaced;

^f 1 Cor. xii. 26.

so in Time it was almost entirely lost amongst Men, by the Prevalence of Sin; and they became in general *Enemies* of God^s, and *Children of the Devil*^h.

But our gracious Maker, pitying us notwithstanding, and treating us like Children, even when thus degenerated, hath mercifully appointed a Method for adopting us into his Family again, after we have cast ourselves out of it; and for restoring and raising us gradually to the same and greater Likeness to him and Favour with him, than even our first Parents ever enjoyed. Now this inestimable Blessing was procured for Mankind through the Means of Jesus Christ; and we become intitled to it by taking him for our Head, and becoming his Members, in such Manner, as you have heard briefly explained. For *to as many as receive him, to them gives he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe in his Name*ⁱ. Being therefore thus united to him, who is in the highest Sense the Son of God; and claiming not in our own Name, but under him; we are admitted again into such a Degree of

^s Rom. v. 10. Col. i. 21. ^h 1 John iii. 10. ⁱ John i. 12:

Sonship as we are capable of ; and made *the Children of God, by Faith in Jesus Christ* ^k.

Indeed not only Christians, but the Jews, are called in Scripture *the Children of God* ^l ; and such they really were ; being first, as Christians were afterwards, the *Children of his Covenant* ^m. But still, as theirs was a State of less Knowledge, more burthensome Precepts, and stricter Government ; the Apostle speaks of them, compared with us, only as Servants in his Family. *Now I say, that the Heir, as long as he is a Child, differeth nothing from a Servant, though he be Lord of all. Even so we, speaking of the Jewish Nation, when we were Children, unqualified for any great Degrees of Liberty, were in Bondage under the Elements of the World. But when the Fulness of Time was come, God sent forth his Son to redeem them, that were under the Law. Wherefore we are no more Servants but Sons* ⁿ. Behold then, as St. John expresses it, *what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, in this distinguished Sense, the Sons*

^k Gal. iii. 26.

^l Deut. xiv. 1.

^m Acts iii. 25.

ⁿ Gal. iv. 1, 3, 4, 7.

of God^o: especially considering the Consequence drawn by St. Paul, *If Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joint-heirs with Christ*^p: which is the

3. Third and last Privilege of Baptism, and completes the Value of it, that by entering into the Christian Covenant we are *made Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, intitled to perfect and endless Happiness in Body and Soul. Had we continued in the primitive Uprightness of our first Parents, and never sinned at all, we could have had no Claim, but from God's free Promise, to any thing more, than that our Being should not be worse to us than not Being. But as we are originally depraved, and have actually sinned, far from having any Claim to Happiness, we are liable to just Punishment for ever. And least of all could we have any Claim to such Happiness, as eternal Life and Glory. But *blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: who of his abundant Mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope; to an Inheritance*

• 1 John iii. 1.

• Rom. viii. 17.

*incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us*⁹.

These then are the Privileges of the Christian Covenant. As for those, who have no Knowledge of that Covenant; the Apostle hath told us indeed, that *as many as have sinned without Law, shall perish without Law*¹; but he hath told us also, that *when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law, they are a Law unto themselves*². And whether none of them shall attain to any Degree of a better Life, is no Concern of ours; who may well be contented with the Assurance, that our own Lot will be a happy one beyond all Comparison, if we please. He, who hath shewn the Abundance of his Love to us, will undoubtedly shew, not only his Justice, but his Mercy, to all the Works of his Hands, as far, and in such Manner, as is fit. There is indeed *none other Name under Heaven, given among Men, whereby we must be saved, but that of Jesus Christ*³. But whether they, who have not had in this

⁹ 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

¹ Rom. ii. 12.

² Ibid. viii. 14.

³ Acts iv. 10, 12.

Life the Means of calling upon it, shall receive any Benefit from him; or if any, what and how; as neither Scripture hath told us, nor Reason can tell us, it is presumptuous to determine, and useless to inquire.

The Points, to which we must attend, are those, which relate to ourselves: that we give due *Thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*^u; and be duly careful to *walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his Kingdom and Glory*^w. For we have a Right to the Privileges of the Covenant, only on the Supposition and Presumption of our performing the Obligations of it. Children indeed of Believers, who are taken out of the World before they become capable of Faith and Obedience, we doubt not, are happy. For the general Declarations of holy Writ plainly comprehend their Case: and our Saviour hath particularly declared, that *of such is the Kingdom of God*^x. But all, who live to maturer Years; as, on the one Hand, they may intitle themselves,

^u Col. i. 12.

Luke xviii. 16.

^w 1 Theff. ii. 12.

^x Mark x. 14.

through God's bountiful Promise, though not their own Merit, to higher Degrees of future Felicity, in Proportion as their Service hath been considerable; so on the other, they are intitled to no Degree at all, any longer than they practise that *Holiness*, in which they have engaged to live, and *without* which *no Man shall see the Lord*^y. We shall be acknowledged as Children, only whilst we obey our heavenly Father: and *the Baptism*, which saveth us, is not the outward putting away of the Filth of the Flesh, but the inward Answer of a good Conscience towards God^z. Which therefore that we may all of us be able always to make, may he of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

^y Heb. xii. 14.

^z 1 Pet. iii. 21.

LECTURE III.

Renunciation in Baptism.

AFTER the Privileges, to which Baptism gives us a Claim, our Catechism proceeds to set forth the Duties, to which it binds us: those Things, *which our Godfathers and Godmothers promised and vowed in our Names.* For without the Performance of these Conditions, neither hath God engaged, nor is it consistent with the Holiness of his Nature and the Honour of his Government, to bestow such Benefits upon us: nor indeed shall we be capable of receiving them. For a virtuous and religious Temper and Behaviour here, is absolutely requisite, not only to intitle, but to qualify and prepare us for a virtuous and religious Blessedness hereafter, such as that of Heaven is.

Now these Conditions, or Obligations on our Part, are three: that we renounce what God forbids; that we believe what he teaches, and do what he commands: or, in other Words, Repentance, Faith and Obedience. These Things are plainly necessary; and they are plainly all that is necessary: for as, through the Grace of God, we have them in our Power; so we have nothing more. And therefore they have been constantly, and without any material Variation, expressed in Baptism from the earliest Ages of the Church to the present.

The first Thing, and the only one which can be explained at this Time, is, that we renounce what God forbids, every Sin of every Kind. And this is put first, because it opens the Way for the other two. When once we come to have a due Sense that we are Sinners, as all Men are, and perceive the Baseness, the Guilt, the Mischief of Sin, we shall fly from it, with sincere Penitence, to the Remedy of Faith which God hath appointed. And when we in earnest resolve to forsake whatever is wrong, we shall gladly embrace all such Truths as
will

will direct us right, and do what they require. But whilst we retain a Love to any Wickedness; it will make us, with respect to the Doctrines of Religion, backward to receive them^a, or unwilling to think of them, or desirous to interpret them unfairly: and with respect to the Duties of Religion, it will make our Conduct unequal and inconsistent; perplexing us with silly Attempts to reconcile Vice and Virtue, and to atone perhaps by Zeal in little Duties for Indulgence of great Faults; till at last we shall either fall into an open Course of Transgression, or, which is equally fatal, contrive to make ourselves easy in a secret one. The only effectual Method therefore is to form a general Resolution at once, though we shall execute it but imperfectly and by Degrees, of following in every Thing the Scripture Rule, *Cease to do evil, learn to do well*^b.

Now the Evil, from which we are required to cease, is also ranged in our Cate-

^a Hence our Saviour, speaking of *John Baptist*, tells the Jews, Ye — repented not, — that ye might believe him. Matth. xxi. 32.

^b Isa. i. 16, 17.

chism under three Heads. For whatever we do amiss, proceeds either from the secret Suggestions of an invisible Enemy, from the Temptations thrown in our Way by the visible Objects around us, or from the bad Dispositions of our own Nature: that is, from the Devil, the World, or the Flesh. And though every one of these, in their Turns, may incline us to every Kind of Sin; and it is not always either easy or material to know, from which the Inclination proceeded originally: yet some Sins may more usually flow from one Source, and some from another; and it will give us a more comprehensive, and, so far at least, a more useful View of them, if we consider them each distinctly.

1. First then, we renounce in Baptism *the Devil and all his Works*. This, in the primitive Ages, was the only Renunciation made: the Works of the Devil being understood to signify, as they do in Scripture, every Sort of Wickedness; which being often suggested by him, always acceptable to him, and an Imitation of him, was justly considered as so much Service done him, and

Obedi-

Obedience paid him. But the Method now taken, of renouncing the Devil, the World, and the Flesh separately, is more convenient, as it gives us a more particular Account of our several Enemies.

What we are taught concerning the Devil, and Demons or wicked Spirits, in the Word of God, is, that a Number of Angels, having sinned against their Maker, (from what Motives, or in what Instances, we are not, as we need not be, clearly told, but) so as to be utterly unfit for Pardon, were cast out from Heaven, and are kept under such Confinement as God sees proper, till the Day comes, when the final Sentence, which they have deserved, shall be executed upon them: but that, in the mean Time, being full of all Evil, and void of all Hope, they maliciously endeavour to make those, whom they can, wicked and miserable, like themselves. And being all united under one Head, and actuated by one and the same Spirit of Ill-will against us, we are concerned to look upon them as one Enemy; and therefore the Catechism speaks of them as such.

What Means they use to tempt us, we are not distinctly informed : and it is great Folly, either, on the one Hand, to doubt of the Reality of the Fact, because we know not the Manner ; or, on the other, to entertain groundless Imaginations, or believe idle Stories ; and ascribe more to evil Spirits, than we have any sufficient Cause. For there is no Religion in favouring such Fancies, or giving Credit to such Tales ; and there hath frequently arisen a great deal of hurtful Superstition from them. This we are sure of, and it is enough, that neither Satan nor all his Angels have Power, either to force any one of us into Sin, or to hinder us from repenting, or, without God's especial Leave, to do any one of us the least Hurt in any other Way. And we have no Cause to think, that Leave to do Hurt is ever granted them, but on such extraordinary Occasions as are mentioned in Scripture. They are indeed often permitted to intice us to sin, as we too often intice one another. But these Inticements of evil Spirits may be withstood by us just as effectually, and nearly by just the same Methods, as

those of evil Men. *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you : draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*^c. Unquestionably our Danger is the greater, as we have not only Flesh and Blood, our own bad Inclinations, and the Allurements of other bad Persons to encounter, but the Efforts of an invincible Enemy likewise. And therefore it was great Mercy in God, to grant us the Knowledge of this interesting, and otherwise undiscoverable, Circumstance of our Condition, that we may increase our Watchfulness in Proportion. And if we do, *greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the World*^d: and he *will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear*^e.

But, though the Devil hath no Power of his own over us, we may give him as much as we will ; and become Slaves and Vassals to him as long as we please. In this Sense his Empire is very large : and on account of it the Scripture calls him *the Prince of the Power of Darkneſs*^f, and even *the God of this World*^g. For he was, and is still,

^c Jam. iv. 7, 8. ^d 1 John iv. 4. ^e 1 Cor. x. 13.
^f Ephes. ii. 2. Col. i. 13. ^g 2 Cor. iv. 4.

in great Propriety of Speech, the God of many Heathen Nations ; who, instead of the righteous and good Maker of Heaven and Earth, worship Deities of such vile and mischievous Characters, as we justly ascribe to the evil one. And even where Faith in the true Deity is professed ; yet pretended Arts of Magic, Witchcraft, Conjuring, Fortune-telling, and such like wicked Follies, approach more or less to the same Crime. For if any of the Wretches, guilty of these Things, either have, or imagine they have, any Communication with the Devil ; they plainly rebel against God, and endeavour at least to confederate with his Enemy. Or if they only pretend a Communication with him ; as indeed usually, if not always, it is mere Pretence ; yet this is very inconsistent with renouncing him. And even when they do not so much as pretend it, and would make us believe, that they have such extraordinary Skill and Power derived from more innocent Sources ; though they profess no Respect to his Person, they imitate him in one of his worst Qualities, as he is the Father of Lies, And the Lies of this Kind are very pernicious

ciuous ones. They corrupt the Notions of Religion ; give Persons unworthy Opinions of God ; and lead them to imagine, that other Beings, as the Stars, or even mere Names, as Chance and Fate, share with him in the Government of the World. But indeed Lies of all Sorts are peculiarly the Works of him, who was a *Liar*, as well as a *Murderer from the Beginning*^h. And other Sins mentioned in Scripture, as more especially diabolical, are, Pride, Envy, Malice, false Accusations. Whosoever therefore allows himself in any of these Things, *is of his Father the Devil, and the Lusts of his Father he doth*ⁱ. But whoever is by Baptism *delivered from the Power of Darknes, and translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son*^k, renounces them all.

Ask yourselves then : Do you renounce them all in Fact ? For mere Words are nothing. Do you carefully avoid them, and labour to preserve yourselves free from them ; or do you live in any of them, and love them ? That is, are you Children of God, or of Satan ; and whose are you willing to remain ?

^h John viii. 44.

ⁱ Ibid.

^k Col. i. 13.

Make

Make us thine, good Lord, and keep us so for ever !

2. We renounce, in Baptism, *all the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World*. The World, which God created, was good : and so far as it continues good, we renounce it not. Therefore the innocent Gratifications, which he hath provided for us in it, we ought not to condemn, but to partake of them with Moderation and Thankfulness : the Difference of Ranks and Stations, which is requisite for the due Order of Society, we ought to maintain with prudent Humility : and every one should take his proper Part, as Providence directs him, in the various Employments which furnish to us the Necessaries or Conveniences of Life. Labouring to procure such a Competency for ourselves and ours, as will support us comfortably in our present Condition, is what we are bound to. And if, by lawful Methods and reasonable Care, we can rise higher, we may allowably do it, and justly consider it as the promised Blessing of God upon our Industry. In these respects then we do not renounce the World : for in these it is not wicked. And we should
not

not affect to detach ourselves too much from the State of Things, in which Heaven hath placed us: but, ordinarily speaking, take our Share, (whatever it happens to be,) and that contentedly, of such Employments as contribute to the common Good. If we do meet with difficult Trials in our Way; as they are of God's chusing for us, we are not to fly from them improperly, but trust in him for Ability to go through them well. And they, who resolve to retire out of the Reach of all such Temptations, seldom fail to run into more dangerous ones of their own creating.

We ought not therefore to shun what our Maker hath appointed us to engage in: but then we ought to engage in it only in such Manner as he hath appointed; and to recollect continually, *that we are of God, and the whole World lieth in Wickedness*¹. Not only the Heathen World had its idolatrous Poms, or public Spectacles, and its immoral Vanities, which were peculiarly meant in this Renunciation at first: but that, which calls itself Christian, is full of Things, from

¹ 1 John v. 19.

which

which a true Christian must abstain. All Methods of being powerful or popular, inconsistent with our Integrity; all Arts of being agreeable at the Expence or Hazard of our Innocence; all Ways of encroaching on the Properties of others, and all immoderate Desires of adding to our own; all Diversions, Entertainments and Acquaintances, that have a Tendency to hurt our Morals or our Piety: making common Practice the Rule of our Conduct, without considering whether it be right or wrong; filling our Time in such Manner, either with Business or Amusements, (be they ever so innocent in themselves) as not to leave Room for the main Business of Life, the Improvement of our Hearts in Virtue, the serious Exercise of Religion, and a principal Attention to the great Concerns of Eternity: these are the Things, in which consists that *Friendship with the World*, which is *Enmity with God*^m; and if any Man love it thus, *the Love of the Father is not in him*ⁿ. Which then do you renounce, and which do you chuse? The World, or the Maker of it? Surely you will adopt the Psalmist's Words:

^m James iv. 4.ⁿ 1 John ii. 15.*I cried*

I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my Hope, and my Portion, in the Land of the living °.

3. We renounce, at our Baptism, *all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh*: that is, every unreasonable and forbidden Gratification of any Appetite or Aversion that belongs to the human Frame. Whatever Inclination is truly primitive in our Nature may be innocently gratified, provided it be in a lawful Manner, and a due Subordination to the higher Principles within us: but when these Bounds are transgressed, there begins Sin. All such Indulgence therefore in Eating or Drinking, as obscures the Reason of Persons, inflames their Passions, hurts their Health, impairs their Fortunes, or wastes their Time; all Sloth, Indolence, and luxurious Delicacy; all Wantonness, Impurity, and Indecency, with whatever tempts to it; these are renounced under this Head: and not these only; but every other Sin, that hath its first Rise within our Hearts. For in the Language of Religion, as the *Spirit* signifies the inward Principle of all Good, so doth

° Psal. cxlii. 6.

the

the *Flesh* that of all Evil. Therefore Vanity and Self-conceit, immoderate Anger, ill Temper and Hard-heartedness, repining at the Good of others, or even at our own Disadvantages; in short, whatever Disposition of our Souls is dishonourable to God, prejudicial to our Neighbour, or unreasonable in itself, falls under the same Denomination with the aforementioned Vices. For *the Works of the Flesh*, saith the Apostle, *are manifest: Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Hatred, Variance, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Envyings, and ſuch like: of the which I tell you before, as I alſo told you in Time paſt, that they who do ſuch Things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God^p. Let us therefore fear, leſt a Promise being leſt us of entering into his Reſt, any of you ſhould come ſhort of it^q. And let us diligently and frequently examine our Hearts, whether we uſe every proper Method to cleanſe ourſelves from all Filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting Holineſs in the Fear of God^r.*

But before I conclude, I muſt deſire you to obſerve, concerning each of the Things,

^p Gal. v. 19—21.

^q Heb. iv. 1.

^r 2 Cor. vii. 1.

which

which we renounce in Baptism, that we do not undertake what is beyond our Power ; that the Temptations of the Devil shall never beset and molest us ; that the vain Shew of the World shall never appear inviting to us ; that our own corrupt Nature shall never prompt or incline us to Evil : but we undertake, what, through the Grace of God, though not without it, is in our Power ; that we will not, either designedly or carelessly, give these our spiritual Enemies needless Advantages against us ; and that, with whatever Advantage they may at any Time attack us, we will never yield to them, but always resist them with our utmost Prudence and Strength. This is the Renunciation here meant : and the Office of Baptism expresseth it more fully ; where we engage *so to renounce the Devil, the World and the Flesh, that we will not follow nor be led by them.* Now God grant us all, faithfully to make this Engagement good, *that after we have done his Will, we may receive his Promise* !*

* Heb. x. 36.

LECTURE IV.

Obligation to believe and to do, &c.

OUR Catechism, in the Answer to its third Question, teaches, that three Things are promised in our Name, when we are baptized : that we shall renounce what God forbids, believe what he makes known, and do what he commands. The first of these hath been explained to you. The second and third shall be explained, God willing, hereafter. But before the Catechism proceeds to them, it puts a fourth Question, and a very natural one, considering that Children do not, as they cannot, promise these Things for themselves, but their Godfathers and Godmothers in their Names. It asks them therefore, *whether they think they are bound to believe and to do, as they have promised for them.* And to this the Person instructed answers,

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Yes

Yes verily: the Fitness of which Answer will appear by enquiring,

1. In what Sense, and for what Reason, they promised these Things in our Names.

2. On what Account we are bound to make their Promises good.

1. In what Sense, and for what Reason, they promised these Things in our Names. A little Attention will shew you this Matter clearly.

The Persons, who began the Profession of Christianity in the World, must have been such, as were of Age to make it their own free Choice. And when they entered into the Covenant of Baptism, they undoubtedly both had the Privileges of it declared to them, and engaged to perform the Obligations of it, in some Manner, equivalent to that, which we now use. When these were admitted by Baptism into the Christian Church, their Children had a Right to be so too, as will be proved in the Sequel of these Lectures: at present let it be supposed. But if Baptism had been administered to Children, without any thing said to express its Meaning, it would have had too much the Appearance of
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an insignificant Ceremony, or a superstitious Charm. And if only the Privileges, to which it intitled, had been rehearsed; they might seem annexed to it absolutely, without any Conditions to be observed on the Childrens Part. It was therefore needful to express the Conditions also. Now it would naturally appear the strongest and liveliest Way of expressing them, to represent the Infant, as promising by others then, what he was to promise by and for himself, as soon as he could. So the Form, used already for Persons grown up, was applied, with a few Changes, to Children also. And though, by such Application, some Words and Phrases must appear a little strange, if they were strictly interpreted: yet the Intention of them was and is understood to be a very proper one; declaring in the fullest Manner what the Child is to do hereafter, by a Figure and Representation made of it at present.

But then, as Baptism is administered only on the Presumption, that this Representation is to become in due Time a Reality: so the Persons, who thus promise in the Child's

Name, are and always have been looked on as promising, by the same Words, in their own Name, not indeed absolutely, that the Child shall fulfil their Engagements, which nobody can promise; but that, so far as need requires, they will endeavour that he shall: on which it may be reasonably supposed, that he will. Anciently the Parents were the Persons, who, at Baptism, both represented their Children, and promised for their Instruction and Admonition. But it was considered afterwards, that they were obliged to it without promising it: and therefore other Persons were procured to undertake it also: not to excuse the Parents from that Care, from which nothing can excuse them; but only, in a Case of such Consequence, to provide an additional Security for it. If then the Parents give due Instruction, and the Child follows it, the Godfathers have nothing to do, but to be heartily glad. But if on either Side there be a Failure, it is then *their Part and Duty* to interpose, as far as they have Ability and Opportunity with any Prospect of Success. Nor is this to be done only till young Persons
take



take their baptismal Vow upon themselves at Confirmation, but ever after. For to that End, even they, who are baptized in their riper Years, must have Godfathers and Godmothers present : not to represent them, or to promise for them, neither being wanted ; but to remind them, if there be Occasion, *what a solemn Profession they have made before these their chosen Witnesses* ^a.

This then is the Nature, and these are the Reasons of that Promise, which the Sureties of Children baptized make in their Name : which Promise therefore may without Question be safely and usually made, provided it be afterwards religiously kept. But they, who probably will be wanted to perform their Promise, and yet will neglect it, should not be invited to enter into it : and if they are, should refuse. Let every one concerned think seriously, whether he hath observed these Rules, or not : for evidently it is a serious Matter, how little soever it be commonly considered as such.

2. The second Question is, On what Account we are bound by what was promised at

^a Office of Baptism.

our Baptism, since we neither consented to that Engagement, nor knew of it. Now certainly we are not bound to do whatever any other Person shall take upon him to promise in our Name. But if the Thing promised be Part of an Agreement advantageous to us, we are plainly bound in point of Interest; and indeed of Conscience too; for we ought to consult our own Happiness. Even by the Laws of Men, Persons, unable to express their Consent, are yet presumed to consent to what is for their own Good^b: and Obligations are understood to lie upon them from such presumed Consent ever after: especially if there be a Representative acting for them, who is empowered so to do^c. And Parents are empowered by Nature to act for their Children; and by Scripture to do it in this very Case; and therefore may employ others to do it under them. But further still; the Things, promised in Baptism, would have been absolutely incumbent on

^b The first Foundation of Obligations *quasi ex contractu* is, that *Quisque præsuntur consentire in id, quod Utilitatem affert.* See Eden, El. Jur. Civ. l. 3. tit. 28. p. 206.

^c Of Stipulations in another's Name, See Inst. 3. 20. 20.

us, whether they had been promised or not. For it is incumbent on all Persons to believe and do what God commands. Only the Tie is made stronger by the Care then taken, that we shall be taught our Duty. And when we have acknowledged ourselves to have learnt it, and have solemnly engaged ourselves to perform it, as we do when we are confirmed, then the Obligation is complete.

But perhaps it will be asked, How shall all Persons, especially the poor and unlearned, know, that what they are taught to believe is really true; and what they are taught to do, really their Duty. I answer: The greatest Part of it, when once it is duly proposed to them, they may perceive to be so, by the Light of their own Reason and Conscience: as I doubt not to shew you. Such Points indeed as depend not on Reason, but on the Revelation made in Scripture, cannot all of them be proved in so short a Way, nor perhaps to an equal Degree of Plainness: but to a sufficient Degree they may; as I hope to shew you also. And in such Matters, they, who have but small

Abilities or Opportunities for Knowledge, must, where they cannot do better for themselves, rely on those who have more : not blindly and absolutely, but so far as is prudent and fit ; just as, in common Business, and the very weightiest of our worldly Concerns, we all trust, on many Occasions, to one anothers Judgment and Integrity : nor could the Affairs of human Life go on, if we did not. And though in this Method of proceeding, some will have far less Light, than others ; yet all will have enough to direct their Steps : and they who have the least, are as much obliged to follow that carefully, as if they had the most ; and will be as surely led by it to a happy End. Hearken therefore to Instruction diligently, and consider of it seriously, and judge of it uprightly ; and fear not at all after this, but that when you are asked, whether *you think yourselves bound to believe and to do what was promised in your Name*, you will be well able, and on good Grounds, to answer in the first Place, *Yes verily.*

But

But your Answer must not stop here. When you are thus persuaded, your next Concern is, immediately to act according to that Persuasion. Now as this depends on two Things; our own Resolution, and Assistance from above: so both are expressed in the following Words of the Answer, *and by God's Help, so I will.* Further: Because our own Resolution is best supported by our Sense of the Advantage of keeping it; therefore the Person instructed goes on, in the same Answer, to acknowledge, that the State, in which he is placed by Baptism, is *a State of Salvation*: and because Assistance from above is best obtained by Thankfulness for God's Mercy hitherto, and Prayer for it hereafter, he concludes, by *thanking our heavenly Father, for calling him to this State; and praying for his Grace, that he may continue in the same to his Life's End.*

Now the Necessity and Nature of God's Grace, and of Prayer and other Means to obtain it, will be explained in their proper Places. The two Points therefore, of which it remains to speak at present, are, the Need of good Resolution, and of Thankfulness for
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that happy State, in which Baptism hath placed us.

In every Thing that we attempt, much depends on a deliberate and fixed Purpose of Mind. But particularly in Religion, when once we are thoroughly convinced, that whatever it requires must be done; and have determined accordingly, that, though we know there will be Labour and Difficulty in going on, and many Solicitations and Enticements to leave off, yet we will set about the Work, and persevere in it; Obstacles and Discouragements, that till then appeared very threatening, will, a great Part of them, vanish into nothing; and those, which remain, will serve only to exercise our Courage, and make our Triumph glorious; provided we keep our Resolution alive and in Vigour, by frequently repeating it in a proper Manner: that is, in a strong Sense of God's Presence, and an humble Dependence on his Blessing. For if we trust in ourselves, we shall fail. And if we pretend to trust in God, without exerting ourselves, we shall fail equally. In either Case, the good Impressions made
on

on our Minds will be continually growing fainter of course : and Multitudes of Things will conspire to wear them quite out. Pleasures will soften us into Diffoluteness; or Amusements, into Neglect of every serious Attention. Love of Riches or Power or Applause will engage us in wrong Methods of attaining them : or the Cares of Life will banish the Duties of it from our Thoughts. Vehement Passions will overset our Virtue : or insinuating Temptations undermine it as effectually. Some of these Things must happen, unless we preserve a steady and watchful, a modest and religious Resolution against them, ever fresh on our Minds.

And nothing will contribute more to our doing this, than reflecting often, with due Thankfulness, that the State, *to which God hath called us*, is a *State of Salvation*: a State of Deliverance from the present Slavery of Sin, and the future Punishment of it; a State of the truest Happiness, that this Life can afford, introducing us to perfect and everlasting Happiness in the next. Such is the Condition, in which, through the
Mercy

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Mercy of God, we Christians are placed; and in which, by a christian Behaviour, we may secure ourselves; and not only preserve, but continually enlarge, our Share of its Blessings. But if we now neglect to do for ourselves what we ought; all, that hath been done for us by others, will be of no Avail. Neither our Baptism, nor our Instruction; nor our learning ever so exactly, or understanding ever so distinctly, or remembering ever so particularly, what we were instructed in, can possibly have any Effect, but to increase our Condemnation, unless we faithfully *continue in the Practice of every Part of it to our Life's End*. This therefore let us all determine to make our constant and most earnest Care, with humble Gratitude to God, *our heavenly Father*, for his undeserved Mercy to us; and with sure Confidence, that if we be not wanting to ourselves, *he that hath begun a good Work in us, will perform it, until the Day of Jesus Christ*^a.

^a Phil. i. 6.

LECTURE V.

Grounds and Rule of Faith.

HAVING already explained to you the several Things, which Christians by the Covenant of their Baptism renounce; I come now to speak of what we are to believe: after which will follow properly what we are to do. For all reasonable Practice must be built on some Belief, or Persuasion, which is the Ground of it: virtuous Practice, on a Persuasion, that what we do is fit and right; religious Practice, on a Persuasion, that it is the Will of God. Now God hath been pleased to make his Will known by two Ways: partly by the mere inward Light of our own Understandings; partly by the outward Means of additional Declarations from himself. The former of these we call natural Religion: the latter, revealed Religion.

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The natural Reason of our own Minds, if we would seriously attend to it, and faithfully assist each other in using it, is capable of discovering, as shall be proved to you, not only the Being and Attributes, and Authority of God; but, in general, what Sort of Behaviour he must expect from such Creatures, placed in such a World, as we are, in order to avoid his Displeasure, and procure some Degree of his Favour. And as we cannot doubt of what our own clear Apprehension, and the common Sense of Mankind, plainly tell us: here is one Foundation of religious Belief and Practice, evident to all Men. And if our Belief and Practice be not suitable to it, our Consciences, whenever we consult them, nay often whether we consult them or not, will condemn us, to our Faces, of Sin; and proclaim to us beforehand the Justice of that future Condemnation, which God will pass upon it. Every one of you, that hear me, have at Times felt this; make, every one of you, a proper Use of it.

If then the Light of Nature were our only Guide, it would teach us more than, I fear, many of us observe. But happy are
we,

we, that this is not our only Guide. For it would leave us uninformed in many Particulars of unspeakable Moment, even were our Faculties unimpaired, and employed to the best Advantage. But alas, the very first of Mankind fell into Sin, and derived a corrupted Nature down to their Posterity: who yet further inflamed their own Passions and Appetites, perverted their own Judgments, turned aside their Attention from the Truth; and *the Light that was in them became*, in a great Measure, *Darkness*^a, even in respect of what they were to do. But what they were to hope and fear after doing wickedly, this was a Matter of far greater Obscurity still. And had we, here present, been left to ourselves, in all Likelihood we had been, at this Hour, (like Multitudes of other poor Wretches in every Part of the World that is unenlightened by Christianity,) worshipping Stocks and Stones: or however, we should certainly, in other Respects, have been *walking in the Vanity of our Minds, having the Understanding darkened, alienated from the Life of God*^b; *Strangers from the Covenant of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World*^c.

^a Matth. vi. 23.^b Eph. iv. 17, 18.^c Eph. ii. 12.

But he was graciously pleased not to leave fallen Men to themselves, but to furnish them with needful Knowledge. What human Abilities, when at the best, might have discovered, they would in all Likelihood have discovered (if at all) so slowly, that we have great Cause to believe, the Religion of our first Parents was derived from his immediate Instruction. But certainly after their Transgression, he made an immediate Revelation to them; and thenceforward vouchsafed from time to time various Manifestations, to such as would receive them, of his Truths, his Commands, and his Purposes: not only republishing the original Doctrines of Reason, but adding new Articles of Belief, new Promises, and new Precepts, as the changing Circumstances of Things required; till at length, by his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, he confirmed all his past Notifications, and took away all Necessity of future ones; acquainting us fully, in the ever-blessed Gospel, with all that we shall need to know, or be bound to do, *till Heaven and Earth pass*^d.

Thus then, besides those Things in Religion, which our own Reason can discern, we

^d Matth. v. 18.

receive others on the Testimony of their being revealed by God : as unquestionably we ought. For if he, who cannot err, and cannot lie, communicates any Information to us; though it requires us to believe, what we had before not the least apprehension of, or should else have imagined to be exceedingly strange and unlikely; though it require us to do, what otherwise we should neither have thought of doing, nor have chosen to do; yet surely his Testimony and Command may well be sufficient Reason for both. We admit every Day, upon the Testimony one of another, Things utterly unknown to us, and in themselves extremely improbable: and we act upon such Testimony in Matters, on which our Fortunes, our Healths, our Lives, depend: as indeed without doing so, the Affairs of the World could not be carried on. Now *if we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater*°. And since we are able to convey the Knowledge of our Thoughts and our Wills to each other, no Question but God is able to convey his to his Creatures.

° 1 John v. 9.

But, allowing that he can, it may be asked, How do we prove, that he hath conveyed it to Men in the Jewish and Christian Revelations? I answer, we believe the Jewish Revelation, for this plain Reason, amongst others, because the Christian confirms it: and we believe the Christian, chiefly upon the full Proof, which Christ and his Apostles have given of it. They who saw him, with their own Eyes, perform Things which Man could not do; and heard him, with their own Ears, foretell Things, which Man could not foreknow, and yet experienced them to come to pass: as for instance, his healing great Numbers of sick Persons with a Word, and raising himself from the Dead: they must be sure, that some Power attended him more than human. And since his Doctrines all promoted the spiritual Worship and Honour of the one true God, and Virtue and Happiness among Men: they must be sure also, that this Power was not that of an evil Spirit, but of a good one: and consequently, that he came from God, and taught his Will. If then it be true, that he did, in their Presence, not only deliver such Doc-

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trine, but foretell and perform such Things; then their Faith was reasonable, and ours is so too. Now they do in the strongest Manner affirm this: as you may read throughout the Gospels and Acts: and why are they not to be credited? They could not every one of them be mistaken in it all; and think they saw and heard, Day after Day, and Year after Year, Things which they did not, any more than we can be mistaken in every Thing that we see and hear continually. Besides, they affirm, that they were enabled to do the same Wonders themselves, and enabled others to do them. All this could not be Mistake too.

And as they could not be deceived in these Points, so neither could they intend to deceive Mankind. There is all the Appearance in the World of their being fair and honest Persons, that would not deceive for Interest. But besides, what they affirmed was absolutely against their Interest. It exposed them, as they could not but imagine it would, to Reproach, Imprisonment, Stripes, Death itself. Yet all these Things they underwent patiently, one after another, through

a Course of many Years, for the Sake of what they taught; none of them all confessing, or being convicted of any Falshood: which yet they must have been, had they been guilty of any: for the Things, which they affirmed, were many, indeed most of them, done publicly: and all the Power, and all the Learning, of the World were employed against them, from the first, to detect them, if possible. Yet no body pretends, or ever did pretend, that they were detected. Besides, if any such Discovery had been made, their whole Scheme must have been ruined immediately: whereas instead of that, they spread their Religion (though it was contrary to the established Superstitions, the deep-rooted Prejudices, and favourite Vices, of all Mankind) through the whole Earth, within a few Years, by mere Force of Miracles and Arguments, and Innocence, against all Opposition. These Things surely are Proofs sufficient of our Saviour's coming from God, without saying any Thing of the Prophecies of the Old Testament, so many of which were so clearly fulfilled in him.

But then, as all the Facts hitherto mentioned are ancient ones; it may be asked farther, How can we now be sure of the Truth of what is said to have been done so many Ages ago? I answer, By all the same Means, which can assure us of any other ancient Fact. And there are Multitudes of much ancients, which no body hath the least Doubt of; and it would be reckoned Madness, if they had. The Miracles of Christ and his Apostles are recorded in the New Testament: a Book very fully proved, and indeed acknowledged, to be, the greatest Part of it, written by the Apostles themselves; and the rest, in their Days, by their Direction: and no one material Fact of it is, or ever was, so far as we can learn, opposed by any contrary Evidence whatsoever. Then, that vast Numbers of Persons were converted to this Religion, as they declared, by seeing these Miracles, and vast Numbers more, by the Accounts, which they received of them; and persevered in their Faith, against all worldly Discouragements, till at length it became the prevailing one; appears partly from the New Testament also, partly from

other Books of acknowledged Authority, written in that Age and the following ones, by Heathens and Jews, as well as Christians; and indeed is in the main universally owned and notorious.

But supposing the Facts, on which our Religion is built, to be truly related, yet it may be asked further, How shall we be sure, that its Doctrines were so too, in which it is much easier to mistake? I answer again: The Doctrines of the Old Testament are attested and confirmed by the New. And for those of the New Testament; we have our Saviour's own Discourses, recorded by two of his Apostles, *Matthew* and *John*, who heard him constantly, and by two other Persons, *Mark* and *Luke*, who at least received them from his constant Hearers. We have also the Discourses of his first Disciples after his Resurrection, recorded in the Acts: we have besides, many Letters written by them, the Epistles, sent on several Occasions, for the Instruction of several new planted Churches. Now all these agree in the same Doctrine. But further, which adds inestimable Value
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to what they have said and written, our Lord himself promised them, that the Spirit of God should *teach them all Things, and bring all Things to their Remembrance, whatever he had said unto them*^f; should come and abide with them for ever, and guide them into all Truth^g. And accordingly this Spirit did come, and manifest his continual Presence with them by his miraculous Gifts. We have therefore the fullest Evidence, that both what they have delivered, as from our Saviour, and what they have said in their own Names, is a true Representation of his Religion.

But another Question is, supposing the Scripture a true Revelation, so far as it goes; how shall we know, if it be a full and complete one too, in all Things necessary? I answer: Since our Saviour had the Spirit without Measure, and the Writers of Scripture had as large a Measure of it, as their Commission to instruct the World required, it is impossible, that in so many Discourses concerning the Terms of Salvation, as the New Testament contains, they

^f John xiv. 26.

^g John xiv. 16. xvi. 13.

should all have omitted any one Thing necessary to the great End, which they had in View. And what was not necessary when the Scripture was completed, cannot have become so since. For *the Faith* was *once for all delivered in it to the Saints*^h: and *other Foundation can no Man lay*ⁱ, than what was laid then. The sacred Penmen themselves could teach no other Gospel than Christ appointed them: and he hath appointed no one since to make Additions to it.

In the Books of Scripture then the Doctrines of our Religion are truly and fully conveyed to us: and we cannot be so sure of any other Conveyance. It is a Confirmation of our Faith indeed, that the earliest Christian Writers, after those of Scripture, in all material Points agree with it. But if they did not, no Writers can have equal Authority with inspired ones. And no unwritten Tradition can long be of any Authority at all. For Things, delivered by Word of Mouth, always vary, more or less, in going through but a few Hands. And the World

^h Jude 3.

ⁱ 1 Cor. iii. 11.

hath experienced, that Articles of Belief, for Want of having Recourse to the written Rule of them, have greatly changed in many Churches of Christians: but in few or none more, than that of *Rome*, which absurdly pretends to be unchangeable and infallible. It is in the Scripture alone then, that we, who live in these later Ages, can be sure of finding the Christian Faith preserved, complete and undefiled: and there we may be sure of it.

For as to any Pretence or Fear of these Books being corrupted and altered, either by Design or Mistake: had the Old Testament been depraved in any Thing essential, our Saviour and his Apostles would have given us Notice of it. And for the New, the several Parts of it were so immediately spread through the World, and so constantly read, in public and in private, by all Christians; and so perpetually quoted in all their Discourses, and all the Disputes of one Sect with another, that they could not possibly be changed, by any of them, in any Thing considerable. For the rest would immediately have discovered it, and charged them with it, which

which must put an End to the Danger. And indeed it is an agreed Point, amongst all who understand these Matters, that nothing of this Kind either hath happened or can happen, so as to affect any one Article of Faith.

But perhaps it will be alledged, that the Bible was written originally in Languages, which have long been out of common Use, and with which but a small Part of Christians now are acquainted : and how shall the rest be sure, that we have them rightly translated into our own ? The plain Answer is, that all Translations, made by all Parties, agree in most Places, and those of the most Importance : and where they disagree, moderate Consideration and Inquiry will enable any Persons, who live in a Country of Knowledge and Freedom, which, God be thanked, is our Case, to judge on some good Grounds, as far as they need judge, which is right, and which is wrong ; which is clear, and which is doubtful. Nor doth any Sect of Christians pretend to accuse our common Translation of concealing any necessary

cessary Truth, or asserting any destructive Error.

But supposing all this, yet it may be urged, that many Parts of Scripture in our Translation, and in the Original too, are dark and obscure: and how can it then be the Guide and Rule of our Faith? I answer: These are few in Proportion to such as are clear: and were they more, the Spirit of God, we may be sure, would make all necessary Points, in one Part or another, sufficiently clear. These therefore the most ignorant may learn from Scripture; at least by the Help of such Explanations, as they are willing to ask and trust in all other Cases, and much admirable Instruction besides: which if they do but respect and observe as they ought; they may be content to leave for the Use of others, what a little Modesty will shew them is above their own Reach.

But that every Person may be enabled the better to distinguish between the necessary Doctrines and the rest: those, which either Christ or his Apostles expressly taught to be of the former Sort, or the Nature of the
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Thing plainly shews to be such, have from the earliest Times been collected together : and the Profession of them hath been particularly required of all Persons baptized. These Collections or Summaries are in Scripture called, *The Form of sound Words*^k, *The Words of Faith*^l, *The Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*^m: but in the present Language of Christians, *The Creed*, that is, the Belief.

The ancient Church had many such Creeds: some longer, some shorter; differing in Expression, but agreeing in Method and Sense: of which that called the Apostles Creed was one. And it deserves that Name, not so much from any Certainty that the Apostles drew it up, as because it contains the Apostolical Doctrines; and was used by a Church, which, before it corrupted itself, was justly considered as one of the chief Apostolical Foundations, I mean the *Roman*.

But neither this, nor any other Creed, hath Authority of its own, equal to Scripture; but derives its principal Authority

^k 2 Tim. i. 13.

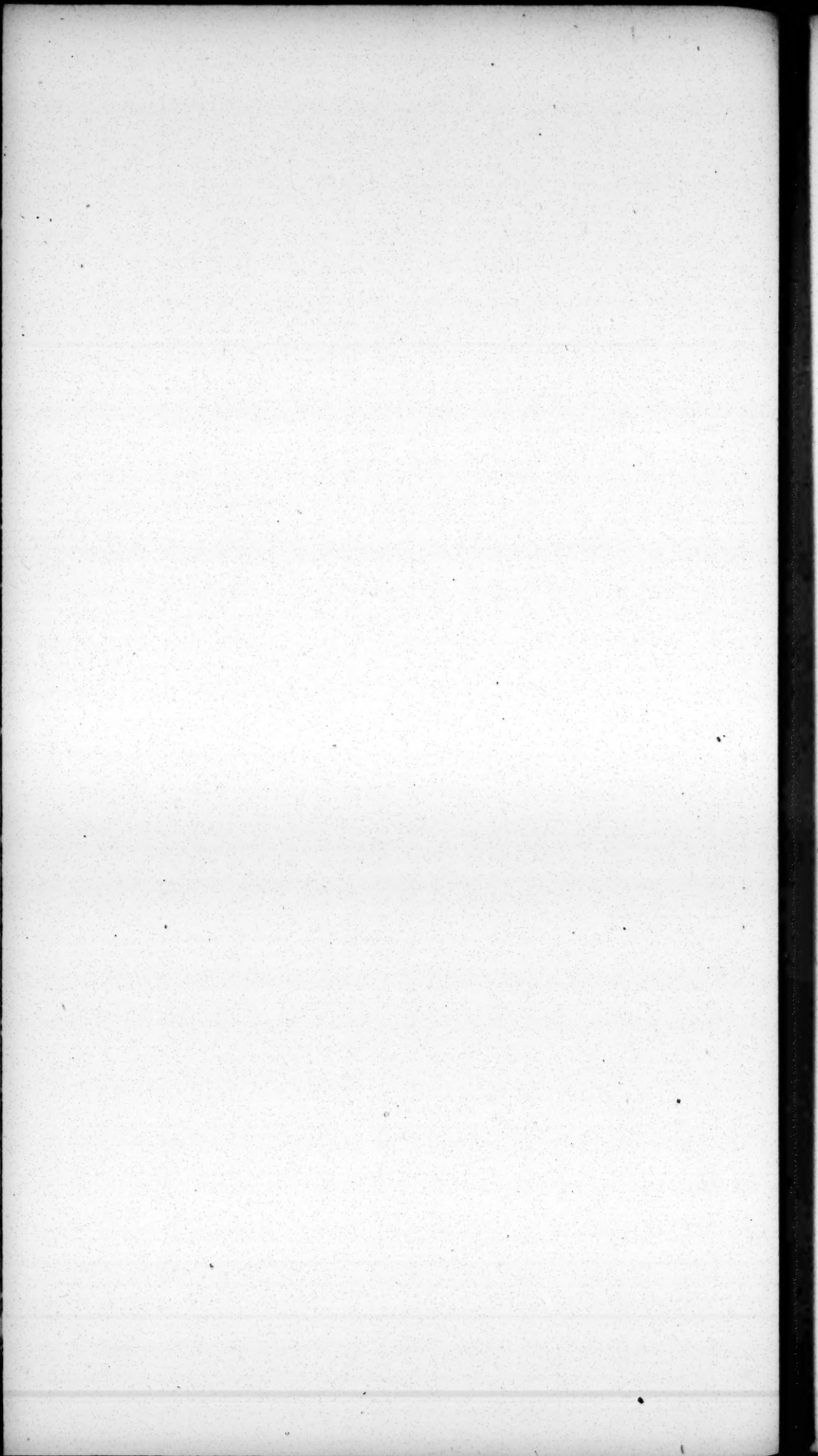
^l 1 Tim. iv. 6.

^m Heb. vi. 1.

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from being founded on Scripture. Nor is it in the Power of any Man, or Number of Men, either to lessen or increase the fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith: which yet the Church of *Rome*, not content with this its primitive Creed, hath profanely attempted: adding twelve Articles more, founded on its own, that is, on no Authority, to the ancient twelve, which stand on the Authority of God's Word. But our Church hath wisely refused to go a Step beyond the original Form; since all necessary Truths are briefly comprehended in it, as will appear when the several Parts of it come to be expounded, which it is the Duty of every one of us firmly to believe, and openly to profess. *For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation*ⁿ.

ⁿ Rom. x. 10.



LECTURE VI.

C R E E D.

Article I. *I believe in God, the Father, &c.*

THE Foundation of all Religion is Faith in God: the Persuasion, that there doth, ever did, and ever will exist, one Being of unbounded Power and Knowledge, perfect Justice, Truth and Goodness, the Creator and Preserver, the Sovereign Lord and Ruler of all Things. With this Article therefore our Creed begins. And as all the rest are built upon it, so the Truth and Certainty of it is plain to every Man, when duly proposed to his Consideration, how unlikely soever some Men would have been to discover it of themselves.

We know, beyond Possibility of Doubt, that we now are; and yet the oldest of us, but a few Years ago, was not. How then
came

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came we to be? Whence had we our Beginning? From our Parents, perhaps we may think. But did our Parents know, or do we know in the least, how to form such a Mind as that of Man, with all its Faculties; or such a Body as that of Man, with all its Parts and Members; or even the very smallest of them? No more, than a Tree knows how to make the Seed that grows into a like Tree: no more, than any common Instrument knows how to do the Work, which is done by its Means. Our Parents were only Instruments in the Hands of some higher Power: and to speak properly, *That it is which made us, and not we ourselves*^a, or one another. And the same is the Case of every Animal and every Plant upon the Face of the Earth.

But could our Parents be the Cause of our Being; yet still the first human Pair must have had some different Cause of theirs. Will it then be said, that there was no first? But we cannot conceive this to be possible. And it certainly is not true. For we have undoubted Accounts, in ancient Histories,

^a Psal. c. 2.

of the Time when Men were but few in the World, and inhabited but a small Part of it; and therefore were near their Beginning: Accounts of the Times, when almost all Arts and Sciences were invented; which Mankind would not have been long in Being, much less from Eternity, without finding out. And upon the whole, there is strong Evidence, that the present Frame of Things is not more than about six thousand Years old: and that none of us, here present, is 150 Generations distant from our first Parent.

If it be said, that universal Deluges may perhaps have destroyed almost all the Race of Men, and so made that seem a new Beginning, which was not: we answer, that one such Deluge we own; but that no such can possibly happen according to the common Course of Nature, as learned Persons have abundantly shewn. And consequently this proves a higher Power, instead of destroying the Proof of it.

But without having Recourse to History, it is evident from the very Form and Appearance of this Earth, that it cannot have

been from Eternity. If it had, to mention nothing else, the Hills must all have been washed down by Showers, innumerable Ages ago, to a Level with the Plains^b. And indeed they, who have thought of these Matters, well know and confess, that the present Constitution of the Heavens and Earth both must have had a Beginning, and must of itself come to an End.

To say therefore, that Things are by Nature what they are, is to say a plain Falschhood, if we mean, that they are so by any Necessity in their own Natures. For then they must always have been such as we see them; and not the least Part of any Thing could possibly have been at all different from what it is: which is the wildest Imagination in the World. The only Nature therefore, which we and the whole Universe have, was freely given us by a superior Being. And the Regularity, in which Things go on, is

^b This Argument is produced from *Theophrastus*, in *Philosophia de Meteoris*, p. 510; and two Answers to it attempted, p. 513: that Mountains may lose Parts, and gain them again, as Trees do their Leaves; or are supported by the internal Fire, which threw them up. The first is an absurd Assertion: the latter a groundless and false one.

no more a Proof, that they were of themselves from everlasting, or shall continue as they are to everlasting, than the regular Motion of a Clock is a Proof, that no Artist made it, or keeps it in Order, or shall take it to Pieces. On the contrary, the more complete this Regularity is, and the longer it lasts, the more fully it shews the Power of its Author; and not only that, but his Understanding and Wisdom also.

Indeed what hath no Understanding, hath, in Strictness of Speech, no Power; cannot act, but only be acted upon: as all mere Matter is; which never moves, but as it is moved. But were this doubtful: look around you, and see what Marks of Understanding and Wisdom appear. Turn your Eyes upon yourselves: How *fearfully and wonderfully are we made*^c! Of what an incredible Number and Variety of Parts, (a vastly greater than perhaps any of us suspect,) are our Bodies composed! How were these formed and put together at first? What hath caused, and what hath limited their Growth since? How hath proper and suitable Nourishment

^c Psal. cxxxix. 14.

been distributed to them all? How hath the perpetual Motion of our Blood, and of our Breath, sleeping and waking, both of them so necessary to Life, been carried on? How is it, that we move every Joint belonging to us, instantly, and with such Exactness, without knowing even which Way we go about it? Our Speech, our Hearing, our Sight, every one of our Senses, what amazing Contrivance is there in them; and the more amazing, the more strictly we examine them! In the Works of Men, it is often mere Ignorance, that occasions our Admiration: but in these, the minuter our Inspection and the deeper our Search is, the greater Abundance we always find of accurate Adjustments and unimaginable Precautions.

But then, besides ourselves, the Earth is replenished with numberless other Animals. Those, of which we commonly take Notice, are an extremely small Part of the whole. Different Countries produce very different Sorts. How many, still more different, the great Waters conceal from us, we cannot even guess. Multitudes remain, so little as almost to escape our Sight, with the best Assistance

stance that we are able to give it; and probably Multitudes more, which escape it intirely. But all that we can observe, we find, down to the very least, contrived with the same inconceivable Art, strangely diversified, yet uniform at the same Time, and perfectly fitted by most surprising Instincts for their several Ways of living, so entirely different each from the other.

What Wisdom and Power must it be then, which hath peopled the World in this Manner, and made such Provision for the Support of all its Inhabitants: chiefly by the Means of innumerable Kinds of Herbs and Vegetables, just as wonderful in their Make, as the Animals themselves: that hath intermixed the dry Land so fitly with Springs and Rivers and Lakes and the Ocean, to supply every Thing with necessary Moisture, and make the Communication of the most distant Parts easy: that hath surrounded the Earth with Air for us to breathe in, to convey our Voices to each other, and to support Clouds for Rain: that hath caused this Air to be moved by Winds, which preserve it healthful: and *bring those, who go down to*

the Sea in Ships, unto the Haven, where they would be^d: that hath placed the Sun at so exact a Distance from us, that we are neither burnt up by Heat, nor frozen by Cold; and hath kept Bodies of such incredible Bulk, as the heavenly ones, rolling on, for thousands of Years together, with so orderly and exact a Motion, that the Returns of Day and Night, and of the various annual Seasons, are precisely foreknown; and perfectly suitable for Labour and Rest, and bringing the Fruits of the Earth to Maturity: whereas were almost any one of these Things considerably altered, we must all of Necessity perish.

But then, how small a Part of the Universe our Habitation may be; and how many, perhaps greater, Wonders the rest may contain; we cannot so much as conjecture. The Millions of Miles, that are between us, and the nearest of the celestial Globes, would be astonishing, if mentioned to you. Yet their Distance is as nothing, if compared with the furthest, which we see: and very possibly the furthest, which we see, may be

^d Psal. cvii. 23, 30.

as nothing to many others : every one of which, we have no Reason to doubt, is as full of Regularity and Beauty and Use, as our own Abode. And from what Origin can the whole of this proceed, but that which the Psalmist rapturously expresses : *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works ! in Wisdom hast thou made them all* °.

To speak of Chance, as the Cause of them, is absurd beyond measure. Chance is merely a Word, to express our own Ignorance : it is nothing, and can do nothing. Suppose one of us were asked, how this Building, in which we are assembled, or the smallest Part of the Dress which we wear, came to be what it is ; and should answer that no Person made it, but it jumped together and held together by Chance ; would not this be gross Folly ? And how shockingly foolish must it be then, to give the same Account of the Existence of a whole World, so admirably contrived, adjusted and conducted throughout ! As evidently therefore as any common Piece of Work proves a Workman to have composed it, so evidently, and very

° Psal. civ. 24.

much more, the immense Fabric of the Universe proves a Being of unspeakable Power and Skill to be the Creator of it.

And accordingly, the Belief of a wise and mighty Author of all hath been received in every Age and Nation: which clearly shews it to be founded in Truth, and written in the Hearts of Men. They corrupted it gradually indeed: first by unworthy Representations of the true God, then by adding the Worship of false Gods, which at length excluded him. But undeniably the primitive Notion was that of an invifible Mind, the Maker and Ruler of this vifible Frame: which being plainly under one uniform Direction, shews itself to have one only sovereign Director and Governor. This Doctrin God himself must have taught our first Parents in the Beginning: He hath confirmed it since by Miracles from Time to Time: and perpetuated the Evidence of it in his holy Word.

That he is not perceived by any of our Senses, is no Objection at all against his Being. For our Minds also are imperceptible by Sense. But as they, notwithstanding,
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shew their Existence by moving and disposing of our Bodies according to their Pleasure ; so doth God shew his, by moving and disposing of all Things as he wills. And the same Argument proves his Presence with all Things. For wherever he acts, there he certainly is : and therefore he is every where. Our Presence is limited, and extends a very little Way : but what is there to limit him ? Our Being is derived from his Command ; and therefore depends on it still : but he is underived ; and therefore independent absolutely. Our Powers are only what he hath thought fit to give us : but his Power is infinite : for every Thing depending on him, nothing can resist him. Our Knowledge is every Way imperfect : but he who made all Things, and is present with all Things, must in the completest Manner know all Things, even the most hidden Thoughts of the Heart. We are often unjust and wicked : but God cannot be otherwise than just and holy. For the only Reasons of our failing to do right are, that we either perceive not what is so, or else are tempted to act contrary to our Perceptions ;

ceptions : but God is subject to no Mistake, or Weakness of any Kind. And, which is the happiest Attribute of all for his Creation, he must be likewise good. For Goodness is plainly a right Thing ; and therefore he must see it to be so : it is plainly a Perfection ; and therefore the perfectest Being must possess it in the highest Degree. We should be always good ourselves, if nothing misled us : and him nothing can mislead. But the most valuable Proof is, that we experience his Goodness : for we live in a World full of it. All that we enjoy, and every Capacity of Enjoyment that we have, proceeds from him. Most of what we suffer proceeds from our own Faults and Follies. And so much of it as comes wholly from his Providence, is designed for our present Improvement and future Reward ; unless by obstinate Misbehaviour we become unfit for Reward : and then we have only ourselves to blame. For as God is knowing and wise ; he cannot but observe the Difference between good Persons and bad : as he is just and holy ; he cannot take Pleasure in those, who are otherwise : and as he is the Governor of the World ;

he cannot fail to shew his Displeasure in that effectual Manner, which the Ends of Government require. And they certainly do require the bad to be punished, as well as the good to be made happy.

Such then is the Nature of God : to whom in the Creed the Name of *Father* is given, as he is both the Father of the Creation by forming it, and also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through him our gracious and reconciled Father, as shall hereafter be explained. The next Word, *Almighty*, denotes, not barely his irresistible Power, but principally that rightful and absolute Authority, with which *his Kingdom ruleth over all*^f. And the last Words of the Description, *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, are added ; partly to express the Ground of that Authority, his being the Creator, and therefore the Proprietor, of the World ; and partly in Opposition to the Errors of the Heathen, who worshipped many Beings in the Heavens and the Earth, as Gods ; which, in these Terms of our Creed, are by evident Consequence declared to be no Gods, because

^f Psal. ciii. 19.

they

they are the Work of his Hands, *of whom and through whom and to whom are all Things* ^g.

The Duties, owing to this our awful Sovereign, will be specified in expounding the ten Commandments, particularly the first. At present therefore I shall only beg you to remember the Apostle's Exhortation: *Take Heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God* ^h. Nothing, but an evil Heart, can make Unbelief desirable, or even supportable. For to every good Heart it must be the greatest Joy, to know that the World is governed by infinite Wisdom, Justice and Goodness; and the greatest Affliction, to have any Doubt of it. If therefore you find the Thought of such a Governor unwelcome; if you could inwardly wish there were none; be assured, *your Heart is not right* ⁱ. And though you could, with such a Disposition, bring yourself, almost or completely, to imagine there is none: what possible Security can shutting your Eyes give you against Danger; or what Excuse

^g Rom. xi. 36.

^h Heb. iii. 12.

ⁱ Acts viii. 21.

can wilfully denying God make for disobeying him?

But then observe further, that supposing you do not disbelieve a God at all, yet if you never think of him, this is not, to any good Purpose, believing in him at all: and if you think of him but seldom, it is believing in him but little. He, on whom we depend continually, to whom we owe Duty continually, in whose Presence we continually are, ought never to be far from our Thoughts: but we should set him before our Eyes so constantly, as to live in his Fear always. Doing this needs not keep us from common Business; it needs not keep us from innocent Pleasures. But it should influence us all effectually, (and happy are we, if it doth) to conduct ourselves in every Thing, as Persons who act under the Inspection of a wise and just Superior: whom we may indeed forget, if we will; but shall be remembered by him: from whom we may depart, but cannot escape. In our Choice it is, whether we will be the better or the worse for him. But one we must: and that be-

beyond Expression. *For God will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing; whether it be good, or whether it be evil* ^k.

^k Eccl. xii. 14.

LECTURE VII.

C R E E D.

Article II. *And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.*

TO believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, is the universal Creed of Nature and Reason. But divine Revelation adds further Professions to it; of which the first is, that of Faith in our ever blessed Redeemer: whose Direction was, *Ye believe in God: believe also in me*^a. Therefore, that we may believe in him as we ought, he is described, in the Creed, by his Name and Offices, his Relation to God and to us.

1. His Name, *Jesus*: by which indeed many of the Jews were called: but it was given him in Obedience to an Appointment from Heaven, made with a peculiar Regard

^a John xiv. 1.

to its proper Meaning. For it signifies, a Saviour: which is a Title conferred, in a lower Sense, on several Persons in Scripture, who delivered others from considerable Dangers or Evils, or obtained for them considerable Benefits and Advantages. Thus the Judges of the Israelites, that freed them from the Oppression of their Enemies, are said to be *Saviours*, whom *God raised up*^b to them. And *Joshua*, who brought them out of the Wilderness into the Land of *Canaan*, subdued it, and put them in Possession of it, not only was in these Respects a Saviour to them; but from a Foresight that he would, was called so, as his proper Name. For *Joshua* and *Jesus* are, in the Original, the same Word; only pronounced a little differently. And hence *Joshua* is constantly called *Jesus* in the Greek Language, and even in our Translation of the New Testament, the two only Times that he is mentioned there^c. But if he deserved to be named a *Saviour*, how much more did that Person, who hath taught and enabled us to

^b Judges iii. 9, 15. Nehem. ix. 27.
Heb. iv. 8.

^c Acts vii. 45.

overcome our spiritual, which are infinitely our worst, Enemies : who hath obtained for us, on most equitable Terms, Deliverance from the Punishment due to our Guilt ; who hath *destroyed*, on our behalf, Death, and *him that had the Power of Death*^d ; and will bestow on us eternal Salvation, in the Kingdom of Heaven ? With perfect Justice therefore was the Order given to his Virgin Mother, *Thou shalt call his Name, Jesus : for he shall save his People from their Sins*^e : only let us remember, that none will be saved from them hereafter, that continue to live in them here. For is the holy *Jesus the Minister of Sin* ? *God forbid*^f.

2. His Offices are expressed by the Word, *Christ*. This, and the Hebrew Word *Messiah*, to which it answers, in their literal Meaning signify, *Anointed*. Oil was anciently in very high Esteem among the Eastern Nations on various Accounts. And, as they were wont to express almost every Matter of Importance by Actions, as well as Words ; one Way of setting any Thing apart, and appropriating

^d Heb. ii. 14.^e Matth. i. 21.^f Gal. ii. 17.

ting it to an honourable Use, was by anointing it with Oil. Therefore we find *Jotham*, in his Parable, makes the *Olive Tree* speak of its *Fatness*, as that *wherewith they honour God and Man*^s. Accordingly the Tabernacle, and Temple, and their Furniture, were consecrated by anointing them. And almost every Sacrifice had Oil, mixed with Flower, added to it, when it was offered up. Nor was it used only to such Things, but such Persons, as were distinguished in Honour above others: To Kings; who are thence frequently stiled in Scripture, *the Lord's Anointed*: To Priests; concerning whom God commands, in the Case of *Aaron* and his Sons, *Thou shalt anoint them, that they may minister to me in the Priests Office*^h: And lastly to Prophets; as where *Elijah* is directed to *anoint Elisha Prophet in his room*ⁱ.

And when once, by Custom, anointing came to signify raising any one to a Station of Dignity, the same Word was used, even on Occasions where no Oil was actually

^s Judges ix. 9.

^h Exod. xl. 15.

ⁱ 1 Kings xix. 16.

employed*. Thus when *Elijah* was bid to anoint *Hazael* to be King over Syria, and *Elisba* for Prophet in his own room: we find not, that he ever did it literally¹. Again, when God is introduced, as saying of the Jewish Patriarchs, before *Moses*, *Touch not mine anointed, and do my Prophets no Harm*^m: we have no Ground to think, that they were ever intitled to this Name by any solemn outward Unction, performed upon them: but only by the distinguished Favour and Regard of Heaven. And in this Sense it was, that God anointed our Saviour with the Oil of Gladness, above his Fellowsⁿ: that is, exalted him to a Rank of Dignity and Honour beyond all Creatures. For in his Person were united those three Offices, in the highest Degree, to which, you have seen, Persons were anciently set apart by anointing.

He is the greatest Prophet, that ever was: having given to Mankind the fullest Know-

* The Jews say that משיחה, Unction, signifies *Principality and Greatness*; עניין קצינות וגדולה. Reland. Ant. Hebr. Par. 2. c. 8. § 6. and see this further proved, ib. c. 9. § 6.
¹ See 1 Kings xix. 15, 16. Comp. v. 19. and 2 Kings viii. 13. ^m Psal. cv. 15. ⁿ Psal. xlv. 7.

ledge of God's Will, and confirmed his Doctrine by the most illustrious Miracles and Predictions. Hence *Isaiah*, speaking in his Name, long before his Appearance, gave that Description of him, which he so justly in the Synagogue applied to himself: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he hath anointed me^o to preach the Gospel to the Poorⁿ*. And *St. Peter*, after his Resurrection, says, that *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with Power*. What these Words mean, the next explain: *who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil; for God was with him^a*: and the whole means just the same Thing, with what he elsewhere says, that he was *a Man approved of God by Miracles and Wonders and Signs^t*.

In the next Place, he is a Priest of an Order, strictly speaking, confined to his own Person, and of which no other ever was or can be; though in some respects the Priesthood of *Melchizedek* peculiarly resembled

^o Chald. doth not understand the anointing here to be with material Oil. ⁿ *Isa.* lxi. 1. *Luke* iv. 18. ^a *Acts* x. 38. ^t *Acts* ii. 22.

and prefigured it. He offered up himself for the Sins of Mankind, as shall hereafter be explained to you. With this Sacrifice he appeared before God, *not in the holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the true, but in Heaven itself*[†]; made Reconciliation for us with him, derives to us continually Blessings from him; and thus remains for ever *an High Priest over the House of God*[‡]: compared with whom, the Jewish Priesthood, and the Sacrifices, which they were daily making, were but as empty Shadows to the real Substance.

But lastly, he is in the highest Sense a King; King and Lord of all. Hence, in the second Psalm, he is called the *Lord's Anointed*, whom he *hath set to be King on his holy Hill of Sion*[§]. Hence in *Isaiah* it is prophesied, that he should *sit upon the Throne of David*, (that is, reign over the People of God) *to order and establish it for ever*^{||}. And hence his Title in *Daniel* is, *Messiah the Prince*^x, or the anointed Prince: the *Son of Man, to whom Dominion should be given, and*

[†] Heb. ix. 24.

[§] Isa. ix. 7.

[‡] Heb. x. 21.

^x Dan. ix. 25.

^{||} Psal. ii. 2, 6.

a Kingdom ; that all People, Nations and Languages, should serve him^y. The Completion of these Prophecies we find in the New Testament: where, as he professes himself *a King*, but *not of a Kingdom of this World*^z; so we find him, *after the suffering of Death, crowned with Glory and Honour*^a, infinitely superior to the highest of mortal Potentates: *all Power being given unto him in Heaven and in Earth*^b; and *a Name above every Name, that is named in this World and that to come*^c: for which Reason he is in the Revelation stiled, *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*^d. This kingly Power he exercises, partly by giving Laws, which every one is bound to obey, and no one may alter, diminish, or add to them: partly by protecting his Church against all its Enemies, visible and invisible, so that neither shall at any Time totally prevail against it; partly by conducting every Member of it, who is dutiful to him, in the Way of Peace and Happiness, through the Grace of his Spirit,

^y Dan. vii. 13, 14.^z John xviii. 33, 36.^a Heb.

ii. 9.

^b Matth. xxviii. 18.^c Phil. ii. 9. Eph. i. 21.^d Rev. xix. 16.

and

and the Ministry of his Ordinances ; and finally he will, in the most conspicuous Manner, display his regal Power, by everlastingly rewarding his faithful Subjects ; and punishing all, who have rejected his Authority, rebelled against it, or disobeyed it.

These then are the Offices, to which God hath anointed, that is, raised and exalted him : and in respect of which he is called the Christ. Let us all be careful to receive him suitably to them ; and so hearken to him as our Prophet ; that we may partake of his Atonement, as our Priest ; and live under his Protection, as our King, for ever and ever.

3. The next Thing, mentioned in the Creed, concerning our Saviour, is the Relation, which he bears to God, as the *only Son* of the Father Almighty. Indeed the Scripture speaks of God, as the Father of all Men ; and of all that are good, as his Sons. Good Christians are so in a higher Sense, than other good Men. Angels are the Sons of God, in a Degree still superior to them. But yet, all other Sonships are so

inconceivably inferior to that of Christ, that they are in Comparison as nothing; and he deserves notwithstanding to be called, as he is several Times called in Scripture, *the only begotten Son* of God^e; which greatest of Titles appears to be his due, on several Accounts.

First, because, being born of a Virgin, he had no earthly Father; but was begotten of God by his Holy Spirit. This Reason the Angel gives, in St. *Luke*. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that holy Thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God*^f.

Secondly, as by Virtue of the abovementioned Offices, to which he was anointed, he received higher Marks of divine Favour, and higher Degrees of divine Likeness, than any other Person ever did. For, as himself argues with the Jews, if, on account of mere earthly Power and Dignity, Men were called *Gods, and Children of the most High*^g; much more might he, *whom the Father*

^e John i. 14, 18. iii. 16, 18. 1 John iv. 9. ^f Luke i. 35.

^g Psal. lxxxii. 6.

sanctified, and sent into the World, in so vastly superior a Character, he stiled, by way of Eminence, the Son of God^h. And thus is he accordingly stiled, on this Account: I will be his Father, and he shall be my Sonⁱ: also I will make him my first born, higher than the Kings of the Earth^k.

Thirdly, he is the Son of God, as being by the Power of God *the first begotten of the dead^l*, restored to Life to die no more. For thus St. Paul expresses it: *God hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written, Thou art my Son: this Day have I begotten thee^m.*

Fourthly, he is so, as being *Heir of all Thingsⁿ*, and by this *Inheritance having obtained a more excellent Name, than Men or Angels^o*: they being as *Servants in the House of God, he as a Son^p.*

But the most important and eminent Sense, in which Christ is the Son of God, remains yet to be mentioned: as, in respect of his divine Nature, he derived his Being

^h John x. 34, &c. ⁱ 2 Sam. vii. 14. ^l 1 Chron. xvii. 13.
^k Heb. i. 5. ^m Psal. lxxxix. 27. ⁿ Rev. i. 5. ^o Acts
 xiii. 33. ^p Heb. i. 2. ^q Ibid. 4. ^r Heb. iii. 5, 6.

from

from the Father, by an eternal Generation; not as Creatures do, who are made out of nothing, and were made by him; but in a Manner peculiar to himself, and inconceivable to us: by which *all the Fulness of the Godhead dwells in him*^a; and *he and the Father are*, in the strictest Union, *one*^r. For God was his Father, *with whom he had Glory before the World was*^s: and *he in the Beginning was with God, and was God*^t; *God over all, blessed for ever*^u. Of this mysterious Doctrine, I shall speak somewhat further, under the Article of the Holy Ghost: and therefore shall only say at present, that being expressly revealed, it ought to be implicitly believed; without attempting in vain to be wise above what is written; to know more, than God hath enabled us. And now,

4thly, From all these Things arises, what the Creed mentions in the last Place, his Relation to us; *our Lord*. For being the only Son of God, he is Heir and Lord of all in his Father's House. Having triumphed

^a Col. ii. 9. ^r John x. 30. ^s John xvii. 5. ^t John i. 1. ^u Rom. ix. 5.

over the Power of Darkneſs, which held Mankind in Bondage, we are his by Right of Conqueſt: and though *other Lords have had Dominion over us, we are now to make Mention of his Name only^w*, as ſuch: having purchaſed us to himſelf for a *peculiar People^x* with his own Blood, *we are not our own; for we are bought with a Price^y: and he died for all, that they, which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him, which died for them, and roſe again^z*. For to this End Chriſt both died, and roſe, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living^a: that he might be ſuch, not in Name only, but in Deed and Reality alſo. For not every one, that ſaith unto him, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he, that doth the Will of his Father, which is in Heaven^b. To all others his Words will be at the great Day, what they were whilſt on Earth: *Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the Things which I ſay^c?* Obedience, conſtant, univerſal Obedience, is the only Manner of acknowledging him, that will

^w Iſa. xxvi. 13.^z 2 Cor. v. 15.^c Luke vi. 46.^x Tit. ii. 14.^a Rom. xiv. 9.^y 1 Cor. vi. 19.^b Matth. vii.

finally

finally prove acceptable to him : and in that Manner we have solemnly promised that we will acknowledge him, and serve him all our Days. Thus then let us ever honour him; thus let us ascribe to him, who is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King, our Saviour, our Lord, and our God, *Glory and Dominion, for ever and ever. Amen*^d.

^d 1 Pet. iv. 11. v. 11. Rev. i. 6.

LECTURE VIII.

C R E E D.

Article III. *Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.*

AFTER setting forth, in general, the Name and Offices of our blessed Redeemer, his Relation to the Father and to us; our Creed goes on to recount the several Particulars of what he did and suffered, what he continues to do still, and will do finally, for our Salvation.

The first of these is, that *the Word was made Flesh*^a: that the eternal Son of God wonderfully joining to himself a Body and Soul like ours, united the human Nature with the divine into one Person: thus be-

^a John i. 14.

coming

coming liable to the same Necessities and Wants, Infirmities and Pains; and endued with the same innocent Passions, Appetites and Affections, that we are: on which Account we read in the Gospels of his feeling Hunger, and Pity, and Grief, and Anger, nay, and *increasing*, as *in Stature*, so *in Wisdom* also^b: not surely in respect of that Nature, which *in the Beginning was with God, and was God*^c, but of the other, by which he was the Man Christ Jesus^d. Further than these Facts, we are not distinctly acquainted with the Extent and Properties of this unparalleled Union. And it is no Wonder, that we are not. For even that of our own Souls with our own Bodies hath many Things in it, utterly beyond our Comprehension. We must therefore, in all Reason, without insisting to know, *how these Things can be*^e; confine ourselves to learn from Scripture, what they are. And it hath plainly taught us, that our blessed Lord was *conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary*.

^b Luke ii. 52.

^c John i. 1.

^d 1 Tim. ii. 5.

^e John iii. 9.

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Concerning the Holy Ghost, there will be a proper Place to speak more at large, in that Article of the Creed, which directly relates to him. At present we are only to consider his Influence in the Conception of our Saviour: which Conception was not in the ordinary Course of Things; but God himself, being already his Father with respect to that divine Nature, which he had from the Beginning, became again so, in a new Sense, with respect to his human Nature too, by the incomprehensible Operation of his Spirit. For *the Birth of Jesus Christ*, to use the Words of Scripture, *was on this wise. When as his Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph; before they came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost*[†]; in pursuance of what the Angel had told her, *Thou shalt conceive and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his Name Jesus. Then said Mary unto the Angel; How shall this be seeing I know not a Man? And the Angel answered and said unto her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: there-*

[†] Matth. i. 18.

fore

fore also that holy Thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God^g.

And thus, in the Fulness of Time, was accomplished, what had been intimated as early as the Fall of Man, by that remarkable Expression, that the *Seed of the Woman* should *bruise the Serpent's Head^h*; and what had been expressly spoken out by the Prophet *Isaiah*, 700 Years before our Saviour's Incarnation, *Behold a Virgin shall be with Child; and bring forth a Son, and they shall call his Name Emmanuel: which, being interpreted, is, God with usⁱ*. When the Scripture says, that such a Person or Thing shall be called by such a Name; it frequently means no more, than that they shall have a Right to be so called; that what that Name signifies, shall be verified in them, shall be true in Relation to them. There are many Instances of this in the Old Testament. And therefore, as our Saviour's coming in the Flesh was the most effectual and illustrious Manifestation of God's Presence with Men, and

^g Luke i. 31, 34, 35
 Math, i, 23.

^h Gen. iii. 15.

ⁱ Isa. vii. 14.

Favour towards them, that could be; though perhaps in common Speech he was seldom, if ever, called; yet in the Language of Prophecy he was very justly called, *Emmanuel*, or, God is with us. For in his Person God was really amongst Men, in such a Manner, and to such Purposes of Grace and Salvation, as he had never been before. And therefore this Name agrees perfectly in Sense, though it differs in Sound, from his common Name, *Jesus*, i. e. Saviour.

After saying, that he was *born of a Virgin*, the Creed adds, that it was of the Virgin *Mary*: not that we are to seek for any peculiar Mystery in her being called *Mary*; as some in the Church of *Rome* have imagined, and accordingly formed groundless and ridiculous Derivations of the Word. But indeed the Name was a very common one among the Jews; by which several Women, mentioned in the New Testament, and several in other Histories, went: and no Intimation is given in Scripture of its having any especial Propriety, or Meaning, in Relation to her. But the Reason of inserting it into the Creed most probably was,

because it is set down in Scripture, and that by naming the particular Person, of whom our Saviour sprung, he might appear to be of that Family, from which it was foretold he should arise, being born of this *Virgin of the House of David* ^k.

Still we are very far from thinking lowly of one, whom first an Angel from Heaven, then *Elizabeth filled with the Holy Ghost*, declared to be *blessed among Women* ^l: and who, with the greatest Reason, said of herself, *He, that is mighty, hath magnified me, and holy is his Name* ^m. For greatly without Doubt she was magnified, a high Honour she received, in becoming, as *Elizabeth* styles her, *the Mother of our Lord* ⁿ. But this, however singular, was not the most valuable Distinction of the holy Virgin. In Scripture, no Advantage of any other Kind is ever put on a Level with that of a pious Heart, and a virtuous Life. On the contrary, when on hearing one of our Saviour's Discourses, *a certain Woman of the Company*, in a Transport of Admiration and Affection, had cried

^k Luke i. 27.

^l Luke i. 28, 41, 42.

^m Luke i. 49.

ⁿ Luke i. 43.

out, *Blessed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps which thou hast sucked*: his Answer was; *Yea, rather blessed are they, that bear the Word of God, and keep it*^a. Now of this truest Blessedness the Virgin *Mary* enjoyed a most eminent Share: appearing, in all that is said of her, to have been pious and devout, reasonable and considerate, humble and modest, mild and gracious, in the utmost Degree.

But though, on account of these Excellencies, as well as her peculiar Relation to him, she was the Object, both of her Son's dutiful Subjection in his younger Years; and of his tender Care, even when he hung upon the Cross: yet we find no Footsteps of any such Regard paid her, either by him or his Disciples, as can give the least Pretence for ascribing to her those Prerogatives and Powers, which the Church of *Rome* doth. Our Saviour, in more Places than one of the Gospels, treats her in so cold, and seemingly negligent a Manner, that one cannot well avoid thinking he did it on Purpose, to discourage that monstrous Notion, of her Right,

^a Luke xi. 27, 28.

as a Mother, to command him, who was her Lord, as well as ours. In the other Parts of the New Testament, excepting those, which I have already quoted, or to which I have referred, there is only an incidental Mention made of her occasionally; as there is of many other Persons: and not the most distant Intimation of any special Honour shewn, or directed to be shewn her. Yet doth the Romish Church appoint Offices of Devotion to her, bearing her Name; address her as *Queen of Heaven*, for so they expressly call her: petition her, almost in the same Breath with God and our Saviour, that she would bestow on them Pardon and Grace here, and everlasting Life hereafter: Things infinitely beyond the Power of any Creature whatever. Nay, some of them professedly bind themselves to pray much oftener to her, than they do to their Maker and Redeemer: and appear accordingly to place much more Confidence in her. And all this, not only without the least Proof, that she hath any Authority in human Affairs, or even any Knowledge of them; but in open Defiance of the Scripture,

which

which directs our Prayers to God alone ; and particularly of that Passage in St. Paul, where the *voluntary Humility of worshipping even Angels*, though they are known to be *ministring Spirits*, is forbidden, as what may *beguile us of our Reward* ; and the Persons, who practise it, condemned, as *not holding the Head*, which is Christ ^p.

But to return to our Subject. The foregoing Doctrine, of *God manifest in the Flesh*, is undoubtedly one very wonderful Part of that, which the Apostle calls *the Mystery of Godliness* ^q. And yet there is nothing in it, either impossible, or indeed more difficult to the Almighty, than in those Productions of his, which we commonly call the Course of Nature ; and wonder at them less, for no other Reason, but because we see them constantly ; the Manner of both being equally inconceivable.

And as the miraculous Conception, and Birth of Christ, was easy to infinite Power : so was it undoubtedly proper and fit, since it was chosen by infinite Wisdom. Indeed

^p Col. ii. 18, 19. Heb. i. 14.

^q 1 Tim. iii. 16.

some Footsteps of that Wisdom even we may be able to trace in this wonderful Dispensation. It appears most becoming the Dignity of so extraordinary a Person, not to enter into the World in the ordinary Manner. As the *first Adam*, possessed of original Uprightness, was formed immediately by the Hand of God; it was suitable, that the *second Adam*, who came to restore that Uprightness, should not be inferior, but indeed superior, in that Respect. Accordingly we read, that *the first Man was of the Earth, earthy; the second, the Lord from Heaven*^r. It seems requisite also, that he, who was designed both for a spotless Example to us, and a spotless Sacrifice to God, should be perfectly free from every Degree of that Impurity, and inward Irregularity, which the tainted Nature of a fallen earthly Father may, for ought we know, according to the established Laws of this World, communicate: whereas being produced in the Manner that he was may have qualified him perfectly for becoming, both a *Lamb without Blemish*^s, and a *high Priest*, in every Respect

^r 1 Cor. xv. 45, 47.^s Exod. xii. 5.

and Degree, *holy and undefiled, and separate from Sinners*^t.

But whether these or others, concealed from us for wise though perhaps unsearchable Ends, were the Reasons why his Incarnation was in this Manner; yet, for his being incarnate, there are several weighty Reasons very evident; and possibly many more, intirely unseen by us.

By becoming Man, he was capable of becoming the most complete and engaging Pattern of Virtue to Man. The Example of the invisible God might seem too high, and too remote from our View. The Examples of Men were all, in one Respect or another, faulty, and likely to mislead us. But our blessed Saviour, by joining in his own Person Perfection with Humanity, gives us the most encouraging Invitation to endeavour at doing so too, according to our Power. He *was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin*^u; to leave us an Example, that we might follow his Steps^v. But in particular, by this Means he hath set us the brightest

^t Heb. vii. 26.

^u Heb. iv. 15.

^v 1 Pet. ii. 21.

Example of that excellent Virtue, Humility, that ever was, or could be ; to this Intent, that *the same Mind might be in us, which was in him : who being in the Form of God, took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men*^w. Of mutual Love also he hath set before us the most amiable Pattern, by this amazing Proof of his Love to Mankind. He, who *was rich in all the Glories of God, became poor for our Sakes ; that we, through his Poverty, might become rich*^x in heavenly Blessings. He, who was exempted from all Suffering, suffered every thing terrible in Life and Death for our Good. Surely these are powerful Motives both to give up, and do, and undergo, whatever we are called to, for our Brethren ; and to *love one another, as he hath loved us*^y. His Resignation likewise, his Meekness, his Zeal, his Prudence, every one of his Virtues, (and his whole Character was composed of Virtues,) are most useful Lessons, derived from his appearing in our Nature, that in a very

^w Phil. ii. 5, 6. 7.
^y John xv. 12.

^x 2 Cor. viii. 9.

peculiar Manner command our Attention, and require our Imitation.

But further still; by becoming Man he had the Means of most familiarly and beneficially instructing Men, in every Point of Faith and Practice. *The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, full of Grace and Truth, and of his Fulness have we all received*². This Condescension enabled him to accommodate his Manner of teaching to the Capacities and Dispositions of his Disciples, to remove their Prejudices, insinuate Truth into their Minds gradually; and thus gently training them up to the Kingdom of Heaven, lay such deep Foundations of his Church, as shall never be moved.

By taking upon him our Nature, he was likewise capable of being a Sacrifice for our Sins; a Doctrine, which in its proper Place shall be explained to you: Therefore, since we are *Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he also himself took Part of the same, that, through Death, he might destroy him, that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil*².

² John. i. 14, 16.

² Heb. ii. 14.

And

And there was another Benefit, consequent to his suffering in our Nature, *viz.* his rising again in it; and thus giving us the fullest Certainty of our own Resurrection to eternal Life.

Even while he sits at the right Hand of the Father, interceding for his Church, and ruling over it, his being Man both makes him a proper Person to represent Men, and offer up their Devotions; and affords us the most sensible Assurance of his knowing the Wants, and being touched with the Necessities, of the Nature in which he shares, *Wherefore in all Things it behoved him, says the Apostle, to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high Priest in Things pertaining unto God. For, in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted^b. Seeing then that we have not a high Priest, that cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities: but one, who was in all Points tempted, like as we are: we may come boldly to the Throne of Grace, in Confidence of obtaining Mercy, and finding Grace to help, in Time of*

^b Heb. ii. 17, 18.

Need°. And since, lastly, we have a Judge appointed us, who hath experienced whereof we are made; we may be in the utmost Degree certain, that his Judgment will be according to Equity: that, on the one hand, all due Allowances will be made to us; and, on the other, no undue ones must be expected by us, in that Day, *when God will judge the World in Righteousness by that Man, whom he hath ordained*^a; and to whom he hath given Authority to execute Judgment, because *he is the Son of Man*°.

° Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16,

^a Acts xvii. 31,

° John v. 27.

LECTURE IX.

C R E E D.

Article IV. *Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into Hell.*

IMmediately after the Mention of our Saviour's Birth, the Creed goes on to the Mention of his Sufferings: for indeed his whole State on Earth was a suffering State. By condescending to be *made in the Likeness of Men*^a, he exposed himself to all the Necessities, Infirmities, and Pains, to which Men are naturally subject. Besides this, he underwent the many Inconveniences of a low and unsettled Condition. And, which was yet much heavier, though his whole Life was spent in *doing Good*^b, yet was it

^a Phil. ii. 7.

^b Acts. x. 38.

spent also in bearing Troubles and Uneasinesses from all around him.

The Prejudices and Misapprehensions of his Kindred and Disciples were no small Trial. But the Perverseness and Malice of his Enemies was a great one beyond Example. They were no less Persons than the Rulers and Guides of the Jewish People, with their blind Followers : whom the Purity and Humility of his Doctrine, and the very needful Severity of his Reproofs for their Pride, Superstition, and Wickedness, had rendered implacable against him. Every Condescension to win them gained only Contempt from them : every Endeavour to convince and reform them did but exasperate them : they misrepresented and derided, they reviled and threatened, they assaulted and persecuted him : till at Length, the Hour being come, which he knew was the proper one to yield himself up to them ; they bribed one of his Disciples to betray him into their Hands ; terrified the rest into forsaking him ; and, after a most unjust Condemnation, followed by a Variety of spiteful Usage amongst themselves, to obtain the Execution of their

Sentence they accused him to the Roman Power; first as a Blasphemer against their Law; and, failing in this, then as a Rebel against the Emperor, *Tiberius Cæsar*, the most suspicious of Men: by which last Suggestion they forced the Governor, though declaring himself to be satisfied of his Innocence, yet to comply with them for his own Safety. After this he was abused and scourged by the Soldiers, crowned in cruel Mockery with Thorns, and loaded, probably till he sunk under it, with the Cross, on which he was to suffer.

This Instrument of Death consisted, as its Name denotes, of two large Pieces of Wood, crossing each other. On one, the Arms of the condemned Person were stretched out, and his Hands nailed; on the other, his Feet, joined together, were fastened in the same Manner: and thus he was to hang naked, exposed to Heat and Cold, till Pain and Faintness ended his Life. The Jews, while they executed their own Laws, never crucified any, till they were first put to Death some other Way; after which, their Bodies were sometimes hanged on a Tree till the Evening.

Evening. But it seems, that only the worst of Malefactors were thus treated; who are therefore stiled in the Law of *Moses*, *accursed*^c. The *Romans* indeed, and other Nations, crucified Men alive: but usually none besides their Slaves; a Sort of Persons, most of them, far lower than the lowest of Servants amongst us.

This then was what the Son of God underwent, when, having *taken upon him the Form of a Servant, he became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross*^d. Now the Torment of hanging thus by Nails, that pierced through Parts of so acute a Feeling as the Hands and Feet, could not but be exquisite; especially as it was almost always of long Duration. And therefore this Punishment was accounted, in every Respect, the severest of any. Our Saviour indeed continued under it only about three Hours: a much smaller Time, tho' a dreadful one, than was usual. And there are plain Reasons for his expiring so soon. He had suffered, the whole Night before, and all that Day, a Course of barbarous Treatment, sufficient to wear down

^c Deut. xxi. 23.

^d Phil. ii. 7, 8.

the Strength of a much rougher and robus-
 ter Make, than probably his was. Before this,
 he had felt Agonies within, grievous enough
 to make him *sweat, as it were, great Drops*
of Blood°. Partly the near View of what he
 was just going, most undeservedly, to suffer,
 might thus affect a Mind, which, having so
 very much Tenderness and Sensibility in the
 Case of others, could not be without some
 proportionable Degree of it in his own.
 And further, the Thought, how sadly, from
 the Time of their Creation to that Day, Men
 had contradicted the End for which they
 were created; how large a Part of the World
 would still reject the Salvation which he
 came to offer, and how few receive it effec-
 tually; what Guilt even good Persons often
 contract, and how tremendous will be the
 final Doom of bad ones: these Reflections,
 which naturally would all present themselves
 to him in the strongest Light on this great
 Occasion, could not but cause vehement
 Emotions in his Breast, zealous as he was
 for the Glory of God and the eternal Happi-
 ness of Men. But chiefly beyond Compari-

° Luke xxii. 44.

son, the awful Sense, that he was to *bear* all these innumerable *Sins* of Mankind *in his own Body on the Tree*^f, *being made a Curse for us, to redeem us from the Curse of the Law*^g, might well produce Feelings inexpressible and inconceivable, which, operating much more powerfully than mere bodily Tortures, and making *his Soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto Death*^h, might so exhaust his Strength by heightening his Sufferings, as to shorten them very considerably. And accordingly we read, that when he had hung on the Cross from the sixth Hour to the ninth, he cried with a loud Voice, in the Words of the twenty-second Psalm, where *David* speaks, as a Type and Representative both of his Sufferings and his following Glory, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* not in the least intending, as *David* before him did not, to signify a Distrust of his Love, in whom at the same Time he claimed an Interest, as his God; but only to express, that those Comforts of the divine Presence, which he used to feel, were now, for mysterious Reasons, with-held from him in that concluding *Hour* of Temptation,

^f 1 Pet. ii. 24.^g Gal. iii. 13.^h Matth. xxvi. 38.

which

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which himself so emphatically called *the Power of Darkneſs*¹. Then adding Words of the firmeſt Truſt, *Father, into thy Hands I commend my Spirit, he bowed his Head, and gave up the Ghoſt*^k.

Thus did God fulfil what he before had ſhewed by the Mouth of all his Prophets, that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer^l. It was intimated in the firſt Prediction, made upon the Fall; namely, that the *Seed of the Woman* ſhould be bruised^m. It was prefigured, both in the Sacrifices of the Old Teſtament, and ſeveral remarkable Portions of its Hiſtory. He is mentioned by *David*, as having *his Hands and Feet pierced*ⁿ: He is largely deſcribed by *Iſaiah*, as a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief; wounded and bruised for our Iniquities, and brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter*^o: He is expreſly ſtiled by *Daniel*, *Meſſiah the Prince*, that ſhould be cut off^p.

Theſe Prophecies, the Creed informs us, were fulfilled under *Pontius Pilate*: for ſo was the then Governor of *Judea* under the

¹ Luke xxii. 53.

^k Luke xxiii. 46. John xix. 30.

^l Acts iii. 18.

^m Gen. iii. 15.

ⁿ Pſal. xxii. 17.

^o Iſ. liii. 3, 5, 7.

^p Dan. ix. 25, 26.

Roman Emperor called. And he is named, because the most usual Way of signifying at what Time any Thing was done, anciently was by mentioning the Person, under whose Government it was done: there not being any other Method of reckoning universally received, as that of counting by the Year of our Lord is now among Christians. And it was very useful to preserve the Memory of the Date: partly, that in After-ages Inquiry might be better made into the Histories and Records of that Age, concerning these extraordinary Events, said to have then happened; and chiefly, that the Messiah might appear to have come and died at that exact *Fulness of Time*^a, when it was foretold he should. One Mark of it was, that the *Sceptre* was then to be *departed from Judah*^b: which evidently was departed, when it was reduced to be a Roman Province. Another was, that the second Temple was to be yet standing; for the *Glory of it* was to be *greater than the Glory of the former*^c: and this could be true only by the fulfilling of another Prophecy, *The*

^a Gal. iv. 4.^b Gen. xlix. 10.^c Hag. ii. 9.

Lord, whom ye seek, shall come to his Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in^t. Accordingly he did come to it, and it stood but a few Years longer. A third Mark was, that, from *the restoring of Jerusalem, to the Messiah's being cut off*^u, were to be such a Number of Weeks; each plainly consisting, not of seven Days, but of seven Years: which Number was completed, while *Pontius Pilate* was Governor: and therefore it was requisite to observe, that under him our Saviour suffered.

Next to the Mention of his Death, in the Creed, follows that of his Burial: a Favour not allowed by the Romans to those who were crucified, unless some considerable Person interceded for it. But the Jewish Law requiring, that they should be taken down and buried before Night^w; and the next Day being a great Festival, when the Violation of this Law would give more than ordinary Offence to the People; *Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable Counsellor, who also waited for the Kingdom of God, craved the*

^t Mal. iii. 1.

^u Dan. ix. 25, 26.

^w Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

Body of Jesus from Pilate: who, after making due Inquiry, *if he were already, and had been any while dead, gave the Body to Joseph*; who buried him respectfully in his own new Tomb, a Sepulchre hewn out of a Rock^x; the Entrance into which the Jews sealed up, and set a Guard over^y. And thus were his own Predictions fulfilled, that he should be crucified^z, the most unlikely of all Deaths: and at the same time that of *Isaiab*, that he should not only be buried, but with the most unlikely of all Burials in such a Case, *making his Grave with the Rich*^a.

The last Part of this Article is, that *he descended into Hell*: an Assertion founded on Psal. xvi. 10. where *David* prophesies of Christ, what St. *Peter* in the *Acts of the Apostles* explains of him, ^b that *his Soul should not be left in Hell*; which imports, that once he was there. And hence, after some Time it was inserted into our Creed, which in the Beginning had it not. However, being taught in Scripture, the Truth of this Doc-

^x Matth. xxvii. 57—60. Mark xv. 43—46. Luke xxiii. 50—53. ^y Matth. xxvii. 62—66. ^z Matth. xx. 19. John iii. 14. xii. 32, 33. ^a Is. liii. 9. ^b Acts ii. 24—32.

trine is indubitable: the only Question is about the Meaning of it.

The first Thought of most, or all Persons, to be sure, will be, that the Word *Hell*, in this Article, signifies what it doth in common Speech, the Place where Devils and wicked Men are punished. And it hath been imagined, that Christ went to triumph over the Devil there; and some add, to rescue Part of the Souls which he held under Confinement^c, by *preaching*, as the Scripture saith he did, *to the Spirits that were in Prison*^d. But the Place of Torment is never determinately expressed in Scripture by the Word *Hades*, which both the Scripture and the Creed use in this Article, but by very different ones; though unhappily our Translation hath used the same English Word for both, instead of calling the former, what it strictly signifies, the invisible State or Region. Besides, we do not read of our Saviour's *triumphing* over the Devil any where, but *on the Cross*^e. And *the Spirits in Prison*,

^c Origen against Celsus, l. 2, § 42. saith, that Christ converted Souls to himself there, *τας βελομενας, η ας εωρα επιτηδεομενας*.

^d 1 Pet. iii. 19.

^e Col. ii. 14, 15.

to whom St. *Peter* saith Christ *by his Spirit preached*, he saith also were those, *which were disobedient, when the Long-suffering of God waited in the Days of Noah*^f. And therefore Christ's *preaching to them by his Spirit* probably means, his exciting by *his Spirit*, which *strove with*^g them for a Time, that Patriarch to be a *Preacher of Righteousness* among them, as the same St. *Peter*, in his other Epistle, calls him^h. But not hearkening to him then, they are now in Prison, reserved for the Sentence of the last Day. This Opinion therefore hath no sufficient Foundation. Nor would it be found, on further Trial, agreeable either to Reason or Scripture,

Others have thought the Word, translated *Hell*, to signify in this Article, as it seems to do in some Passages of the Old Testament, and as the English Word anciently did, merely a Place under Ground, by which they understand, the Grave. And they plead for it, that the first Creeds, which mentioned our Saviour's descending into Hell, used no other Words to express his

^f 1 Pet. iii. 20,^g Gen. vi. 3,^h 2 Pet. ii. 5,

being buried, and therefore designed to express it by these. But allowing that, still our Creed, expressing the Descent into Hell after the Burial, must mean a different Thing by it.

And indeed the most common Meaning, not only among Heathens, but Jews and the first Christians, of the Word *Hades*, here translated *Hell*, was in general, that invisible World, one Part or another of which, the Souls of the Deceased, whether good or bad, inhabit. And this, how strange soever it may seem to the unlearned, yet is by others acknowledged¹. Probably therefore all that was intended to be taught by the Expression, now before us, is, that when our Saviour died, as his Body was laid in the Grave, so his Spirit went where other separate Spirits are. And we should remember, in repeating these Words of the Creed, that this is the whole of what we are bound to profess by them. But in what Part of Space, or of what Nature, that Receptacle is, in which the Souls of Men continue from their Death till they rise again, we scarce know at all;

¹ See Pearson on this Article, p. 239, 240.

excepting that we are sure it is divided into two extremely different Regions, the Dwelling of the Righteous, called in *St. Luke, Abraham's Bosom*, where *Lazarus* was; and that of the Wicked, where *the rich Man* was; *between which there is a great Gulph fixed*^k. And we have no Proof, that our Saviour went on any Account into the latter; but since he told the penitent Thief, that *he should be that Day with him in Paradise*^l; we are certain he was in the former; where *they, which die in the Lord, rest from their Labours*, and are blessed^m; waiting for a still more perfect Happiness at the Resurrection of the last Day.

How the Soul of our Saviour was employed in this Abode, or for what Reasons he continued there during this Time, further than that he might *be like unto his Brethren in all Things*ⁿ, we are not told, and need not guess. But probably this Article was made Part of

^k Luke xvi. 22, 23, 26.

^l Luke xxiii. 43. Non ex his verbis in cælo existimandus est esse paradisos. Neque enim ipso die in cælo futurus erat homo Christus Jesus: sed in inferno secundum animam, in sepulchro autem secundum carnem. Aug. Ep. 57. ad Dardanum. Pearson, p. 237.

^m Rev. xiv. 13.

ⁿ Heb. ii. 17.

the Creed, in order to assert and prove, that he had really a human Soul, which was really separated from his Body. And its Residence, during the Separation, in the same State and Place, where other *Spirits of just Men made perfect* ° are, surely made a vast Addition to their Felicity. For *Abraham*, who *rejoiced to see his Day* ^p at a Distance, must be inexpressibly more rejoiced to see him present there. All the good Persons, whose going thither preceded the Death of our Lord, must certainly partake in the Joy. And all who came, or shall come, after, must feel much greater Consolation for being in a Place, where their Redeemer had been seen by such Numbers of his Saints; and to which, in some peculiar Sense, his Presence is yet continued: for we learn from *St. Paul*, that the immediate Consequence of a pious Man's *Departure* hence is *being with Christ* ^q.

But were the Reasons of his *descending into Hades*, or of the Insertion of it into our Belief, ever so obscure; it may suffice us,

° Heb. xii. 23.

See Peters on Job, §. 11. p. 399.

^p John viii. 56.

^q Phil. i. 23.

that

that the Reasons of his Sufferings and Death are very plain, as well as very important. With these therefore I shall conclude this Lecture.

1. The first is, that he might be an Example to his Followers. For so he became the noblest and most engaging Pattern imaginable of that great and hard Duty, patient Submission to the Will of God : since being of a Rank infinitely superior to the Afflictions of this World, and having done nothing to deserve the least of them, he most willingly chose, and cheerfully bore, the most grievous that were possible. Well then may we, Mortals and Sinners, take whatever befalls us, in Life or in Death, meekly and contentedly ; *because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps : who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth, who yet, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him, that judgeth righteously*. The Example also of Kindness and Love to Men he shewed yet more fully by his Cruci-

1 Pet. ii. 23.

fixion,

fixion, than by his Incarnation : foreseeing, as he plainly did, all the Pains and Torments he should undergo, in executing his great Design of reforming and saving Mankind ; yet deterred by nothing from undertaking it, and persevering in it. *If therefore he so loved us, we ought also*, as St. John argues, to love one another^a : and *because he laid down his Life for us, we ought*, if a proper Occasion require it, even to *lay down our Lives for the Brethren*^t.

2. A second Reason of his dying was, that he might thus confirm the Truth of his Doctrine : to which it must needs add a very powerful Confirmation, that, though the Jews expected a warlike and victorious Messiah, and therefore his taking upon himself a meek and suffering Character must grievously prejudice them against him ; yet he declared from the very first, what you read in St. John, that *as Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness, so should the Son of Man be lifted up*^u ; signifying, as the same Evangelist elsewhere assures us, *what Death*

^a 1 John iv. 11.
iii. 14.

^t 1 John iii. 16.

^u John

he should die^w. And he all along persisted in this Declaration; rejected every Opportunity of worldly Power; fearlessly taught the most provoking Truths, and voluntarily met what he foretold he should suffer. Stronger Evidences of Sincerity, than these, a Man cannot give: and therefore St. *John* thus reckons up the Testimonies to Christ's Mission: *There are three, that bear Witness in Earth; the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood*^x. And St. *Paul* observes, that *before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good Confession*^y; on Account of which he is called in the Book of *Revelation*, *the faithful Witness*, or *Martyr*^z.

3. The third, and principal Reason of our Saviour's Death was, *to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself*^a, that *being justified by his Blood, we may be saved from Wrath, and reconciled to God*^b. But as I cannot now enlarge on this Doctrine suitably to its Importance; and the Article of *the Forgiveness of Sins* will be a proper Place to treat of it; I shall only add at present, that *God hath*

^w John xii. 32, 33. xviii. 32.

^y 1 Tim. vi. 13.

^b Rom. v. 9, 10.

^z Rev. i. 5.

^x 1 John v. 8.

^a Heb. ix. 26.

made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him^c. For if one died for all, then were all dead: and he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, which died for them, and rose again^d. This we should do with great Dutifulness; for we are not our own, we are bought with a Price^e: and with great Thankfulness; for he hath delivered us from the Bondage of Corruption into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God^f. Unto him therefore, that loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father, unto him be Glory and Dominion, for ever and ever. Amen^g.

^c 2 Cor. v. 21.^f Rom. viii. 21.^d Ibid. 14, 15.^g Rev. i. 5, 6.^e 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

LECTURE X.

C R E E D.

Article V. *The third Day he rose again from the dead.*

HAVING carried on the History of our Saviour to the lowest Act of his Humiliation, our Creed sets forth, in the next Place, how God was pleased to exalt him for undergoing it. And the first Part of this brighter View of Things, was his Resurrection: that is, the restoring of his Body to a Condition of performing the several Functions of Life, as before; and the Reunion of his Soul to it. In discoursing of which, I shall speak, First, concerning the Reality of his rising again: Secondly, the Circumstances: Thirdly, the Uses of it.

I. The Reality; which depends on two Things; that he was really dead, and that he was really alive afterwards.

As for the former: the whole of the History shews it fully, nor did any of his Opposers ever call it in Question. His Crucifixion was public, at Noon-day, before a great Multitude. The Jews who procured it, the Romans who executed it, would both take Care, that it was done effectually. And the piercing of his Side with a Spear, which, by the Blood and Water that followed, plainly appeared to reach his Heart, as it must have produced some Signs of Life, had there been any remaining; must also have destroyed, in a few Moments, all that could remain. Then, after this, we find him treated as dead, both by Friends and Enemies; *Pilate*, after a particular Inquiry into that very Matter, granting his Body to be buried; one of his Disciples embalming him with Spices, another laying him in his own Sepulchre; the Jews making no Objection; but fully satisfied of his Death, and only careful to
guard

guard against any Pretence of a Resurrection.

But that, notwithstanding, he was afterwards really alive again, which is the other Point, we have Multiplicity of Evidence of the strongest Kinds. The Sepulchre was newly hewn out of a Rock, shut up with a very large Stone rolled to the Mouth of it, and guarded Night and Day by a Band of Soldiers; who were to watch till the Time was over, within which he had said he should rise. Yet, on that very Day, the Sepulchre was found open; and the Body was gone. Now by what Means could this come to pass? To his Disciples it could be of no possible Use, to carry on a Deceit, by getting his Corpse into their Possession. For if they had succeeded so ill with their Master at their Head, what could they expect by carrying on the same Scheme after they had lost him, but to come to the same End? And what in all Reason had they to do, but get quietly out of the Way, at least till the Matter was a little forgotten? Indeed we find in Fact, that far from being enterprising, they were so disheartened, even when he

was first seized, that they all forsook him : and there was little Likelihood, that they should have more Courage to attempt any Thing, just after he was executed. Or if they had, what Manner of Chance was there, that when a Band of sixty Men, used to military Discipline, were set to watch the Grave, they should either find them all asleep at once, though it was Death to be so, and not wake one of them ; or be able to convey the Body away from them, though they were awake ? Evidently they must have failed, and probably have been seized, in the Attempt. Or could they have carried their Point ; yet, by the Resistance made to them, it must have appeared, how unfairly they had carried it : and all Hope of getting a Resurrection believed must have been utterly at an End. Since then the Body was not found, and could not, by any human Means, or indeed for any rational Purpose, have been carried away ; it must have been raised by the Power of God, as the Gospels relate it was.

But to give a full and sensible Demonstration of it, *he shewed himself alive* to his Disciples,

ciples, *after his Passion, by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them forty Days*^a. Now in this they could no more be mistaken, than you can in seeing and hearing me, and knowing me to be alive at this Time. As they had almost despaired of his rising again, they were but too backward to believe it: and indeed they would believe it on no other Testimony, than that of their own Eyes and Ears; and *Thomas* even not without touching him, and putting his Hands on the Marks of his Wounds: which the rest, as well as he, when they were *terrified, and supposed they had seen a Spirit*, and not their Lord, were invited to do. *Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have*^b.

They could not, after such Trials, be deceived in so plain a Matter. And if it be imagined, that they might intend to deceive others; consider: They began their Testimony to his Resurrection, at the very Time, and in the very Place, where they affirmed this Fact to have happened: Their Adver-

^a Acts i. 3.

^b Luke xxiv. 37, 39.

saries had all the Power of the Place in their Hands ; and all the Advantages, that Men could wish, for detecting the Fraud, if it was one ; and they were in the strongest Manner interested and concerned to make Use of them. Is it possible now, that Men so timorous, as the Disciples plainly were just before, should, immediately after, venture, without Need, to bring the just Resentment of both Magistrates and People upon themselves, by asserting so strange an Event, if it was not true ? Yet they did assert it : and far from being disproved in it, thousands at once, notwithstanding the most powerful worldly Motives, and the deepest-rooted Prejudices, to the contrary, were convinced by them. And thus they went on, through many Years, to the End of their Days, all of them suffering patiently and joyfully, for the Sake of this Testimony, every Thing that could be terrible in Life, and at length Death itself : nor is it pretended, that any one of them either retracted at any Time what he had said, or behaved in any Respect so as to weaken the Credit of it. On the contrary, they were uncommonly pious and

virtuous, as well as bold and unwearied : and, to complete the Strength of their Evidence, they not only taught, illiterate as they were, a Doctrine more worthy of God, than the wisest of Men had known before, professing to have received it from their Master's Mouth ; but they confirmed the whole by vast Numbers of Miracles, which he enabled them, and they enabled their Followers, to perform, both during that Age and the next.

This is briefly the Proof of our Saviour's Resurrection. And if this be sufficient Proof ; then it is no Objection, that more than sufficient was not given : for Instance, that he did not appear to the Rulers and whole People. They had no Way deserved it. He was no Way bound to it. Nor doth God, in any Case, give Men just such Evidence, as they please ; but such as he knows to be enough for honest Minds : and if others will not believe without more, they must take the Consequences. Christ appeared to the twelve Apostles often : to 500 Persons at once besides. If this Number be thought too small, when was ever the tenth Part of

it required in any other Matter? And if Christ was to appear to all the Jews, why not to all the Gentiles? Why not to all us at this Day? We have no Proof, that any one, who desired it, was refused seeing him. Possibly many, certainly St. *Paul*, were converted by seeing him. Some perhaps nothing would have convinced: others would not have owned their Conviction. This would have made strange Confusion. And had the whole Nation been convinced, their Notions of the Messiah's temporal Kingdom would probably have thrown them at the same Time into a Rebellion against the *Romans*; or however, the Suspicions of the *Romans* would have driven them into one: and then the Gospel would have been thought a mere political Artifice, to serve a favourite Purpose. Nay, had they continued quiet, and the *Romans* let them alone; even then we should have lost that Evidence for the Truth of our Religion, which arises from the Persecutions, undergone by the first Teachers of it: from the very advantageous Circumstances, that the Jews our Adversaries have been the Keepers of those Prophecies, which prove Christ to be

be come : and also from their wonderful Dispersion and Preservation : besides the Proof which will arise, in God's good Time, from their Conversion to Christianity.

II. Thus much for the Reality of Christ's Resurrection. The Circumstances of it, which was the second Head proposed, it is best that you should read in the New Testament, where they are told at large. And if the Accounts, which the several Evangelists give, should seem not easy to be reconciled in some Particulars ; you will recollect, that nothing is more common in all Historians, than for one to omit what another relates ; to tell but Part of what another tells more fully ; to join close together in Writing, what happened at some Distance of Time in Fact ; and to neglect a trifling Exactness in Points, that are not material. And the Spirit of God, which directed the Gospel Historians, might with great Wisdom permit them to do thus : it being a strong Proof to every considerate Mind, that they did not contrive together what Story they should tell ; but that each related, fairly and artlessly, what

what he saw and heard at the Time, and recollected afterwards, concerning this great Fact: of which the more absolutely certain they were in general, the less they would think of being accurate in every little Part; and of drawing up a methodical, and minute, and scrupulously strict Narration of the whole that had passed.

But there is one Circumstance, which requires to be considered more distinctly; that of the Time. The almost constant Expression of Scripture concerning this is the same with that of the Creed, that *he rose again the third Day*: reckoning the Day of his Death for the first; the Day, which he continued dead, for the second; The Day of his Resurrection for the third. And this is the common Way of computing every where. Thus the Jews computed the eighth Day, on which their Children were to be circumcised. Thus also the Physicians call that a Tertian, or third Day Ague, in which there is but one Day wholly free from it. And thus Men reckon in all Cases. Sometimes the Expression in Scripture is, that *he should rise*

rise after three Days: meaning, not after the third Day was ended, but after it was begun. Just as when *Rehoboam* had said unto the People, *Come again unto me after three Days*, it follows, *So all the People came to Rehoboam on the third Day, as the King bade, saying, Come again to me on the third Day*^c. And in one single Place of the New Testament it is said, *the Son of Man should be in the Heart of the Earth three Days and three Nights*^d. But this without Doubt was intended to be understood conformably to the rest: as it well may. For a Day and Night in the Jewish Language is no more, than what we commonly call a Day in ours. Hence we find in the Book of *Esther*, that when she had appointed the Jews to fast for her good Success, *neither eating nor drinking three Days, Night nor Day*; that is, to fast three Days and three Nights; and, after that, she *would go in to the King* to petition for them; the very next Words, notwithstanding, are, that *on the third Day she put on her royal Apparel*, and went into the

^c 2 Chron. x. 5, 12. See Whitby on Mark vii. 31.

^d Matth. xii. 40.

King's

King's Presence^e. Again, when we read; that Elijah went 40 Days and 40 Nights to Horeb the Mount of God, 1 Kings xix. 8. we have no Cause to think the Meaning is, that he travelled incessantly Night and Day; for so his Journey must have been much sooner ended: but that he employed in it such a Part of every Day, during all that Time, as he was conveniently able. This Way of speaking may seem strange to us: but the Jews understand it so well, that not a Man of them, excepting a very weak one of late Date^f, hath ever pretended to raise an Objection from this Passage, though very slight Pretences will serve their Turn^g. Thus then our Saviour, dying on Friday, and rising on Sunday, was dead three Days, and yet rose the third: which was a sufficient Space of Time to prove him really dead; but not sufficient, either for him to see Corruption, or for his Enemies to leave off watching his Grave, or for his

^e Esth. iv. 16. v. 1. See Whitby on Matth. xii. 40.

^f Nizzachon vet. in Wagenfeil, p. 236. who objects, that at most it could be but three Days and two Nights.

^g Concerning this whole Matter, see Reland. Ant. 4. 1. 21.

Disciples to despair absolutely and totally : and therefore no fitter Time could have been fixed.

III. The third Point to be considered is ; The Uses of the Resurrection of Christ : which are great and many.

In general, it appears plainly from hence, that he really came from God ; and that therefore whatever he hath commanded must be done ; and whatever he hath affirmed, promised, or threatened, will be found true. For there can possibly be no stronger Proof of his divine Mission, than, when he had been openly put to Death as a Deceiver, for God to reverse the Sentence in so extraordinary a Manner, as restoring him to Life again. This was the great Evidence, to which he had before his Death appealed. No one either did, or could, object against it, as not being a decisive one. And therefore on its coming to pass, as he had foretold it would, he is justly said by the Apostle to be *declared the Son of God with Power, by the Resurrection from the Dead*^h. But there

^h Rom. i. 4.

are two Things proved by it more particularly.

1. That his Sufferings are accepted by our heavenly Father, as a full Atonement for the Sins of Men. For since God hath loosed the Bands of the Grave, with which he was holden on our Account; it is manifest, that he hath completed the Satisfaction owing from us; that he hath *through Death destroyed him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil; and delivered those, who through Fear of it, were all their Life-time subject to Bondage*ⁱ. If then we do, by Faith and Repentance, qualify ourselves to receive the Pardon, that he is authorized to give; we may boldly say, with the Apostle, *Who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right Hand of God, who maketh Intercession for us*^k.

2. From our Saviour's Resurrection appears the Certainty of our own. The Promise,

ⁱ Heb. ii. 14, 15.

^k Rom. viii. 33, 34.

which

which he made, was, that every one who believed on him should have everlasting Life, and he would raise him up at the last Day¹: and to shew the Truth of it, he raised up himself from the Death, which he had suffered for the Sins of Men. This is a Proof, clear and strong beyond all Exception or Cavil. Since Christ is risen, our Resurrection is possible: and since Christ hath promised, it is certain. If then we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, we must believe too, as St. Paul justly argues, that them also, which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangel, and with the Trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; and they, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the Clouds, and so shall we be ever with the Lord^m. Blessed therefore be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled; that

¹ John vi. 40.^m 1 Theff. iv. 14, 16, 17.

*fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for usⁿ.
And may the God of Peace, that brought again
from the dead that great Shepherd of the Sheep,
through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant
make us perfect in every good Work, to do his
Will; working in us that which is well pleasing
in his Sight, through Jesus Christ : to whom be
Glory, for ever and ever. Amen^o.*

ⁿ 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

^o Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

LECTURE XI.

C R E E D.

Article VI. *He ascended into Heaven,
and sitteth on the right Hand of
God the Father Almighty.*

THE first Care of our blessed Lord, in
Consequence of his Resurrection, was
to satisfy his Disciples fully of the Truth of
it: the next, to fit them for instructing
Mankind in his Religion, of which it was
one principal Doctrine and Evidence. *He*
therefore shewed himself alive to them, after
his Passion, by many infallible Proofs; being
seen of them forty Days; and speaking of the
Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God^a.
This being done, as he had now gone
through the whole of his Work on Earth;

^a Acts i. 3.

it was proper, that he should return to that happy Place, from whence his Compassion to a lost World had brought him down: according to the Words of his own Prayer; *Father, the Hour is come; I have glorified thee on Earth: I have finished the Work, which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the Glory, which I had with thee, before the World was^b*: There did not remain any further Reason for his appearing personally amongst Men; till he should *come again, to judge the quick and the dead*. Many Ages were to pass *before that great and terrible Day of the Lord^c*. It was fit therefore, that, as St. Peter speaks, *the Heaven should receive him, until the Times of the Resitution of all Things^d*.

And, though the Redemption of Mankind was completed by him, so far as, in this lower World, it could be; yet there was left an important Part of it, to be accomplished above. The Jewish Dispensation, as the Epistle to the Hebrews more especially informs us, was *a Shadow of good Things*

^b John xvii. 4, 5.

^c Joel ii. 31.

^d Acts iii. 21.

to come°. As therefore, under this, the great Sacrifice of Atonement was yearly slain without the Sanctuary first; and then the high Priest entered alone, with the Blood of it, into the most holy Place; there to offer it before the Lord, and atone for the Sins of the People: so, in the Gospel Age, was our blessed Saviour, first, as *the Lamb of God*^f, to be sacrificed for our Sins on Earth; and then, as the *high Priest of our Profession*^g, to enter, *with his own Blood, into Heaven; the true holy Place*, of which the other was a Figure; there to appear, with it, in the Presence of God, for us^h: and thus, having offered one Sacrifice for Sins, he was for ever to sit down on the right Hand of Godⁱ.

When the Time therefore was come, for this Purpose of divine Wisdom to take Effect; having gradually prepared the Minds of his Apostles to bear his Departure, he, in the last Place, with his usual Tenderneſs, gave them all a solemn Blessing: the Words of which indeed are not delivered down to

° Heb. x. 1.

^f John i. 29.

^g Heb. iii. 1.

^h Heb. ix. 24.

ⁱ Heb. x. 12.

us; but probably they might not be unlike, and certainly they could not well be more affectionate, than those, which we find he used for their Consolation, even before his Sufferings, on a more distant Prospect of his being taken from them. *Let not your Heart be troubled: believe in God; believe also in me. I go to prepare a Place for you; and I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter: that he may abide with you for ever. Peace I leave with you: my Peace I give unto you: not as the World giveth, give I unto you. Let not your Heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid^k. It is expedient for you, that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: But if I depart, I will send him unto you, and your Heart shall rejoice, and your Joy no Man taketh from you. These Things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have Peace. In the World ye shall have Tribulation:*

^k John xiv. 1, 2, 3, 13, 16, 27.

but be of good Cheer; I have overcome the World¹.

Undoubtedly with such like Words of Grace and Affection, which every good Christian may and ought to consider as spoken to himself, did our Lord, before his Departure, comfort his Disciples under the immediate View of that interesting Event. *And it came to pass, the Evangelists informs us, that as he was yet blessing them, while they beheld, he was taken up: and a Cloud received him out of their Sight^m.*

It is hardly possible to conceive stronger or more various Emotions of Mind, than those, with which the Breast of every one of his Followers must be filled, on this Occasion: of Surprise and Astonishment at what they had seen; of Gratitude and Tenderneſs, in Return for what they had heard; of Grief and Fear concerning their now solitary Condition; yet mixed, at the ſame Time, with Submission and Hope, and faithful Trust in their dear Lord. But, as he himſelf had told them, *If they loved him, they would rejoice,*

¹ John xvi. 7, 22, 33.

^m Luke xxiv. 51. Acts i. 9.

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because he went unto the Fatherⁿ; so in fact, amidst all the Passions working within them, this prevailed above the rest; and triumphant Gladness of Heart was the Feeling, that took Possession, and dwelt with them. *They worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great Joy: and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God^o.*

Let us then rejoice also in this glorious Exaltation of Christ our Head. Let us consider the Opportunity it gives us, of exercising that *Faith* in him, which the Apostle justly calls *the Evidence of Things not^p seen*; and of obtaining a Reward, suitable to the greater Virtue and Piety that we shew, in conducting aright our Understandings, our Hearts and our Lives, under a lower, and yet sufficient, Degree of Evidence for our holy Religion. *Because thou hast seen me*, saith he himself to St. Thomas, *thou hast believed: blessed are they, that have not seen, and yet have believed^q.* This Blessedness therefore, by his Ascension, he hath

ⁿ John xiv. 28.^o Luke xxiv. 52.^p Heb. xi. 1.^q John xx. 29.

left to his whole Church the Means of acquiring: *that the Trial of your Faith, as St. Peter expresses it, may be found unto Praise and Honour and Glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory; receiving the End of your Faith, the Salvation of your Souls*. Let us consider too, that if his Absence tries our Faith, the Manner of his going away powerfully confirms it. For the Apostles were Eyewitnesses of his ascending into the Clouds: and what stronger Proof need we, of his coming from God, than his being thus taken up to him again; according to his own repeated Predictions; besides the remarkable, though obscurer, Intimations of the same Thing in the Old Testament?

Nor let it seem strange, that the Scripture should speak of one especial Place, as the peculiar and appropriated Residence of God. We acknowledge, that he is, and

¹ 1 Pet. i. 7, 8, 9.

cannot but be, every where. *Heaven and Earth are full of the Majesty of his Glory*: yea, *the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain him*. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: If I go down to Hell, thou art there also. If I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me*^u. Yet, notwithstanding this, the Scripture constantly mentions him, as having condescended to establish his Throne in one particular Place; and exhibit himself there, in the Symbol of Light inaccessible: where therefore his holy Angels attend upon him, and see his Face; from whence he issues forth his Commands, as Princes do theirs from the royal Palace; and is represented, as viewing and observing the Actions of his Creatures; and pouring down Blessings or Vengeance, as their Behaviour requires. *The Lord is in his holy Temple, the Lord's Seat is in Heaven: his*

^s Te Deum.^t 1. Kings viii. 27.^u Psal. cxxxix.

Eyes behold, his Eyelids try, the Children of Men^w. Here it is, that thousand thousands minister unto him; and ten thousand Times ten thousand stand before him^x, celebrating his Praises, and rejoicing in the Light of his Countenance. For in his Presence is the Fullness of Joy, and at his right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore^y.

Into this blessed Place then did our Saviour ascend: and there, as the Creed, in Conformity with Scripture, teaches, *sat down at the right Hand of the Father*. Not that God, who is an infinite Spirit, and by the Word of his Power doth whatever he pleases, both in Heaven and Earth; either hath, or needs, bodily Members, for Instruments of Perception or Action, like our imperfect Nature. But these Things are figuratively ascribed to him, in Condescension to human Capacities. And the Meaning of such Figures is easily understood. He is the King of the whole World. Now into a King's immediate Presence not all Persons are usually admitted. And of those, who are, not all possess the same Rank and Degree

^w Psal. xi. 4.

^x Dan. vii. 10.

^y Psal. xvi. 12.

of Nearness to him : but every one such as he pleases to appoint. Now the highest Mark of Dignity, which the Eastern Monarchs conferred on the Person, whom they esteemed and favoured most, was placing him, on Occasions of Solemnity, at their right Hand ; the second in Honour was next to the Royal Person, on the other Side ; and the rest of the Court succeeded in the same Order. Thus, when the Mother of King *Solomon* came to petition for *Adonijah*, the Scripture informs us, *he sat down on the Throne, and caused a Seat to be set for her, and she sat on his right Hand*^a. And when the Sons of *Zebedee* had, by Mistake, imagined the Kingdom of our Saviour to be like one of this World, their Petition was, *that they might sit, one on his right Hand, the other on his left, in his Kingdom*^a. Sometimes the Posture of standing is mentioned : as *Psal. xlv. 9. on thy right Hand did stand the Queen in Gold of Ophir*. And, when the Court of Heaven, attending on their Sovereign, is described ; *I saw, saith the Prophet, the Lord sitting on his Throne ; and all the Host of*

^a 1 Kings ii. 19.

^a Matth. xx. 21.

*Heaven standing by him, on his right Hand and on his left^b. When therefore our blessed Lord is represented by St. Stephen to stand, or in the cx. Psalm, and frequently in the New Testament, to sit at the right Hand of God: we are to conceive by it, not that he is confined to this or that Posture or Place; but that he is raised, in respect of his human Nature, to a Rank and Station above all Creatures; possessed of the fullest Happiness, the highest Honour, and the most sovereign Authority: that Authority, in which Daniel foretells his being invested: *I saw, and behold, one, like the Son of Man, came with the Clouds of Heaven; and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him Dominion and Glory and a Kingdom, that all People, Nations and Languages should serve him: his Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, which shall not pass away; and his Kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed^c. The fulfilling of which Prophecy is thus recorded by the Apostle. God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right Hand in the heavenly Places, far**

^b 1 Kings xxii, 19.

^c Dan. vii. 13, 14.

above all Principality and Power, and Might and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come^d; that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and Things under the Earth^e: And he must reign, till he hath put all Enemies under his Feet^f. Sitting at God's right Hand implies this Preeminence: for to which of the Angels said God at any Time, Sit on my right Hand, until I make thine Enemies thy Footstool^g?

Indeed all Power, both in Heaven and Earth, was given to^h our Saviour before his Ascension: but not, till afterwards, was his Title to it publicly recognized, and Possession of it solemnly taken by him: which, in other Words, is *sitting down at the right Hand of God*.

But let us consider, not only the Nature of our Saviour's Exaltation; but, what principally concerns us, the Benefits of it to Mankind, which are three: his sending the Holy Spirit to abide for ever with his

^d Eph. i. 20, 21.

^e Phil. ii. 10.

^f 1 Cor. xv. 25.

^g Heb. i. 13.

^h Matth. xxviii. 18.

Church: his interceding for it with the Father: his powerful Protection of it against its Enemies.

1. His sending the Holy Spirit. This was reserved, with great Wisdom, till after his Ascension; both because it was then most needed, to comfort his Disciples under the Loss of his personal Presence; and also, because it afforded a new Evidence of his divine Power, that, far from being in a worse Condition by his Departure, they were endued with higher Degrees of miraculous Gifts, than ever they had been before. St. *John* therefore, upon our Saviour's promising the Spirit to them who should believe on him, observes, that *the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*ⁱ. And St. *Peter*, on the Day when it was bestowed, saith, *Therefore, being by the right Hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear*^k. The miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost indeed, being no longer necessary, ceased many Ages ago: but his

ⁱ John vii. 39.

^k Acts ii. 33.

sanctifying Graces, a much more important Blessing, which we shall always need, continue still; and constitute his present Share in the Work of our Redemption: agreeably to the Assurance, which our blessed Lord gave, of *another Comforter to abide with us, and dwell in us for ever*¹.

2. His Intercession with the Father. For his Oblation of himself being accepted, as the Foundation of a new Covenant of Mercy and Favour; we have now an Advocate in Heaven, sure to prevail: *an high Priest, that can be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities, having been tempted in all Points as we are*^m, ever appearing for us in the Presence of God; and efficaciously pleading the Pardon, which he hath purchased, for all who repent of and forsake their Sins. *Who then is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right Hand of God; who also maketh Intercession for us*ⁿ.

3. His Protection of his Church, against all its Enemies, spiritual and temporal.

¹ John xiv. 16, 17. ^m Heb. iv. 15. ⁿ Rom. viii. 34.

The Attempts of the former he defeats by the abovementioned Methods, the Influences of his Spirit to preserve us from Sin, and the Efficacy of his Intercession to procure us Pardon on most equitable Terms, whenever we fall into it. As for the latter: upon the first Opposers of his Church, the Jewish and Roman Persecutors, his vindictive Power hath been most remarkably exercised: and the succeeding Adversaries of Religion, in every Age, have served, and shall serve, only for a Trial of *the Faith and Patience of the Saints*^o: generally, without prevailing to their Harm even here; and always being subservient to their Happiness hereafter: till at Length the appointed Time shall come, when *the Kingdoms of this World shall become the Kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ*^p: and having reigned on this Earth, till its Period arrives, he shall resign up to God his Kingdom of Grace, its End being accomplished; and reign over his Saints, in that of Glory, for ever and ever: fully performing that invaluable Promise, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me*

^o Rev. xiii. 10.

^p Rev. xi. 15.

in my Throne: even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his Throne⁹.

These Things being so, instead of amusing ourselves with the speculative Consideration of his Ascension, and the Reasons of it; we should learn from his Departure to prepare for his Return. To this was the Attention of those, who saw it, directed by the Angels. *Ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you, shall so come, in like Manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven¹.* The present Article of our Creed is, that he *sitteth at the right Hand of God.* The next is, *that from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.* And what should this very close Connexion teach us, but that we all be careful to behave in such Manner, that we may be ready to *meet our Lord²* at his coming, and *enter with him into his Joy³*? He hath descended upon Earth to procure us a Right to future Happiness; and instruct us, how to obtain it: he is

⁹ Rev. iii. 21.

¹ Matth. xxv. 21.

² Acts i. 11.

³ 1 Theff. iv. 17.

now ascended up into Heaven, *to prepare a Place for us*^u: there seated in Glory, he invites us to him. What then remains, but that we fix *our Hearts where our Treasure is*^w; and *set our Affections on those Things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right Hand of God*^x? But in vain do we rejoice in a glorified Saviour, unless we become *his Friends, by doing what he commands us*^y; in vain do we lift up our Eyes and our Wishes to his happy Abode; unless, by resembling him now in Purity and Holiness, we qualify ourselves to partake hereafter the Resemblance of his Glory. *Who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy Place? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt Life, and doth the Thing which is right, and speaketh the Truth from his Heart. He that hath used no Deceit in his Tongue, nor done Evil to his Neighbour, and hath not slandered his Neighbour. He that setteth not by himself: but is lowly in his own Eyes. In whose Eyes a vile Person is contemned: but he honoureth them, that fear the Lord. He*

^u John xiv. 2.^w Matth. vi. 21.^x Col. iii. 1.^y John xv. 14.

*that bath clean Hands and a pure Heart,
and bath not lift up his Soul unto Vanity.
He shall receive the Blessing from the Lord,
and Righteousness from the God of his Salva-
tion^z.*

^z Psal. xv. and xxiv.

LECTURE XII.

C R E E D.

Article VII. *From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

THIS is the great and awful Doctrine, which makes all the preceding ones so important to us: that *God hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness by that Man, whom he hath ordained^a*: a Truth, the Belief of which it infinitely concerns every one of us to settle well in our Souls, and be duly affected by it.

The Reason of our Minds, and even the Feelings of our Hearts, give us very strong Grounds to be persuaded of a future Judgment, had we no further Evidence. We are all of us, by Nature, capable of perceiving,

^a Acts xvii. 31.

what is just and right for us to do, and what is otherwise : we are all capable of acting according to this Perception : we all see, it is fit we should ; and fit we should suffer for it, if we do not. When we behave according to our Duty, there springs up a delightful Peace and Security within our Breasts ; when we knowingly transgress it, we not only disapprove and accuse ourselves, whether we will or not, but experience a foreboding Expectation of just Recompence. *For Wickedness, condemned by her own Witness, is very timorous : and, being pressed with Conscience, always forecasteth grievous Things^b.* Nor do these Horrors relate only, or chiefly, to what we have deserved to suffer in this World : but when our Share in it draws to an End, and Death approaches, then our Fears grow stronger than ever, concerning somewhat, which is yet to come^c. And thus are all Men *a Law unto themselves ; and shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing Witness^d.*

^b Wisd. xvii. 11.

^c Ἐπειδὴ τις ἐφυγὼς ἢ τὰ οἰδᾶται τελευτῆσαι, εἰσέρχεται αὐτῷ φόβος καὶ φόβος τις πρὸς τὸ ἐν τῷ περὶ αὐτοῦ ἔστιν ἔσθαι.
Plat. de Rep. l. i.

^d Rom. ii. 15.

That some Persons are able to overwhelm these Apprehensions under Business and Pursuits, to drown them in Debauchery and Intemperance, to divert them by Pleasures and Amusements, to set up little Cavils against them, and even affect to ridicule them; is no Objection in the least to their being just, and well grounded. The Feeling is plainly natural: every one of these Methods to get rid of it, is plainly a Force upon Nature. Often it returns with double Terror, for having been unjustly driven away: and seldom, or never, can the most thoughtless, or most hardened Person, lose intirely those Fears, which are seated in the very Bottom of our Souls; and which if we could lose, we should only be the more surely miserable: for still the Foundation of them would remain unshaken.

Still it would be true, that there is a God, who made us, and is at all Times intimately present with us: who therefore with unspeakably more Ease perceives all that passes in our very Hearts, than we do one another's outward Actions: who being perfect in Knowledge, distinguishes, in every Case,

what is good from what is evil ; and being perfect in Holiness, approves the one, and abhors the other. Even we are thus affected in some Degree : and his infinite Purity must therefore be infinitely more so. Now what he hates, he can punish as he pleases ; and reward what he loves : for all Power is in his Hands ; all Nature depends on the Word of his Mouth ; and he is *the same Yesterday, To-day, and for ever* *.

Think then : will the righteous and holy King of the whole Earth, when he hath planted his Laws in our Hearts, when he hath made us for the very Purpose of obeying them, when he hath filled us with so deep a Sense of what will follow, if we disobey them ; suffer us, after this, to despise and dishonour him, to injure his Creatures, abuse ourselves, and disappoint the great Design of forming us ; and yet take no Notice ? Doth he govern the World, to the very least Parts of it, with so much Wisdom and Care, in every other Respect ; and will he be so unwise and negligent, as to overlook the one Thing, that deserves his Attention above all ; and make no Distinction

* Heb. xiii. 8.

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between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not^f? It cannot be: and the Conscience of every one of you, at this Moment, tells you it cannot.

If then such a Distinction will be made, when and where will it be made? Here, in this World, it plainly is not done, to a Degree, that the almighty Governor of it can possibly think sufficient. Perpetually we see *just Men, to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the wicked: and wicked Men, to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the righteous^g.* Amidst all this Disorder, there are indeed evident Marks of a Providence: but of a Providence, that gives only Specimens and Earnests of its Justice at present; reserving the full Vindication and Display of itself for that future State, in which our Souls, being naturally immortal, are evidently destined to exist; and where all Men shall receive according to their Works. This is the great End, that God had in his View, when he created us: and it is the principal Point, that we should have in our own View, through the whole of our Lives.

^f Mal. iii. 18.

^g Eccl. viii. 14.

More or less all Mankind, even in their darkest Ignorance, have always had some Persuasion of a future Recompence : which, however mixed with Errors, yet, being thus universal and lasting, must have been grounded in Nature and Truth. And the wiser and better any Persons were, amongst the Heathens, the stronger and more rational Belief they had of this Doctrine: which yet was not owing merely to their Wishes, and their Hopes : for the worst of Sinners, that were the farthest from desiring a just Reward hereafter, feared it, whether they would or not. Thus we find it recorded of a very wicked Heathen, that when *Paul reasoned of Righteousness and Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled*^h.

But still, while the Evidence of this great Article consisted wholly in mere human Reasonings, about a Matter, that was out of Sight : bad Persons, though they could not help at some Times believing enough to fright them ; yet made a Shift at others to disbelieve enough, to make them tolerably

^h Acts xxiv. 25.

easy in doing wrong: and good Persons, though they might have Hope sufficient to influence them in common Cases; yet often had not sufficient to support them under harder Duties, and heavier Afflictions, than ordinary. Even the obscurer Confirmations of this Doctrine in the Old Testament therefore were a great Benefit to those, who partook of them: and as they had no Right to any such Assurances of it; they had no Cause to complain, that they were not clearer. But we have infinite Cause to be thankful, who are favoured in the Gospel with the fullest and strongest Attestation to this most interesting of all our Concerns. Christians, unless they renounce their Christianity, cannot disbelieve a future Judgment. The only Difficulty is, to be influenced by our Belief, as we ought. And in that also the Scripture hath given us the best Help, which is possible to be given; by its affecting Accounts of the several Particulars, that relate to this awful Transaction: the Persons on whom, the Person by whom, the Time when, the Things for which, and the Manner in which, the

final

final Sentence of Happiness or Misery is to be pronounced. These Points therefore I shall now endeavour to place before you distinctly. And,

I. The Persons, on whom, are, *the quick*, that is the living, *and the dead*. All that have died before, in every Age of the World, shall be restored to Life: and all that remain alive, shall be joined with them to receive their Doom; nor shall any Exception be made. For we are expressly assured, that *the dead, small and great, shall stand before God*¹. The very highest therefore shall not escape by their Power, the richest by their Wealth, the wisest by their Abilities or Artfulness: nor, on the other Hand, shall the meanest Wretch be looked on, as too inconsiderable for God's Notice; or the most ignorant be exempted from answering for the Care, which he hath taken, to get the Knowledge, that he might, and to use the Knowledge, that he had, of his Duty. Whatever our Station be, we are bound alike to behave in it, as well as we can:

¹ Rev. xx. 12.

and how far we have done so, and how far we have failed of it, is the one Inquiry, that our Judge will make. Other Distinctions, how considerable soever they appear in our Eyes, to him are as nothing. All Creatures are equally beneath his infinite Majesty; but none are either beneath or above his Inspection now, or his Sentence hereafter. Here then we are put, every one of us, on a fair Trial, without any Disadvantage or Inequality whatever. Both the most honourable, and the most contemptible Persons, as to worldly Circumstances, may be either the happiest or the most miserable in the next Life, just as they shall chuse. Let those of high Degree therefore be humble, those of low be content, and all be watchful over themselves.

2. The Person, by whom the Sentence shall be passed, is Jesus Christ. *For the Father himself judgeth no Man: but hath committed all Judgment to the Son, and given him Authority to execute it, because he is the Son of Man*^k: because he is the Person, described by that Name in the Prophet Daniel, before whom *the Judgment was to*

^k John v. 22, 27.

be set, and the Books opened¹: who also is no less peculiarly qualified, than expressly appointed for it; since in him divine Perfection is joined with Experience of human Infirmary. So that being judged by one, who *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin^m*; we may be sure, that every due Allowance will be made to our natural Weakness, and no undue one to our wilful Wickedness. Unless therefore we repent and amend, he, that came the first Time to save us, will come the second to condemn us; and the meek and merciful Jesus appear cloathed with such Terror, that we shall say to the Mountains and the Rocks, *Fall on us, and hide us from the Face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb: for the great Day of his Wrath is come, and who shall be able to standⁿ?*

3. The Time, when these things shall be, himself informs us, *it is not for us to know*; being known to the Father alone, and put in his own Power°. But still, what

¹ Dan. vii. 10, 13.
16, 17.

^m Heb. iv. 15.

^o Acts. i. 7.

ⁿ Rev. vi.

there is need we should be told concerning it, the Scripture hath revealed: that it shall come unexpectedly, and that it shall come soon. The general Judgment may come, when we least think of it. But however distant it may possibly be in itself, yet to every one of us it is undoubtedly in effect very near, and even at the Door. For *it is appointed unto Men once to die, and after this the Judgment*^p. A few Years, it may be a few Days, will bring us to our End here: and in whatever State Death finds us, in the same will the last Judgment find us also. *For there is no Device, nor Wisdom in the Grave*^q: but *where the Tree falleth there shall it be*^r. Take Heed therefore to yourselves, lest your Hearts be overcharged, either with the Pleasures and Amusements, or the Cares and Labours of this Life; and so that Day come upon you unawares: for as a Snare shall it come on all them, that dwell on the whole Earth^s. The evil Servant that shall say in his Heart, my Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his Fellow-

^p Heb. ix. 27.^q Luke xxi. 34, 35.^r Eccl. ix. 10.^s Eccl. xi. 3.

servants,

servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken: the Lord of that Servant shall come in a Day, that he looketh not for him; and in an Hour, that he is not aware of; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth^t. Watch ye therefore, and be ready: blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing^u.

4. The Things, for which we shall be judged, are, all our voluntary Deeds, Words and Thoughts. *For we must appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body^w.* Now what we say, and what we think designedly, is as truly Part of our Doings, as what we act. Our Discourse may be of as much Service or Harm to others; and even our inward Imaginations may as much prove us to be good or bad in ourselves, and contribute to make us yet better or worse. Often indeed we cannot help wicked Fancies coming into our Minds; and that alone will never be imputed to us as a Sin. But we can help inviting, indulging, and de-

^t Matt. xxiv. 48—51.

^u Ibid. 42, 44, 46.

^w 2 Cor. v. 10.

lighting in them: and if we do not, it is just, that we should account for our Fault. And on the other Hand, it is fit and reasonable, that every good Person should be rewarded, not only for the religious and worthy Actions that he hath performed; but for every good Word, that hath proceeded from his good Heart; for his pious and virtuous Purposes and Affections. For God sees the one, just as clearly, as the other: *there is no Creature, that is not manifest in his Sight; but all Things are naked and opened unto the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do*^x. And certainly what he sees, and sees to be proper for his Notice, he will not fail to take suitable Notice of it. The Scripture therefore assures us, with the utmost Reason; not only, that *by our Words we shall be justified, and by our Words condemned*; giving Account for the very *idlest* and *slightest* of them, either with Grief or Joy, according as its Tendency was right or wrong^y: but also, that *God shall judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ*^z: *that there is nothing cover-*

^x Heb. iv. 13.^y Matt. xii. 36, 37.^z Rom. ii. 16.

ed, that shall not be revealed; and bid, that shall not be known^a. For God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing; whether it be good, or whether it be evil^b.

Therefore, with respect to other Persons, let us be charitable, and judge *nothing needlessly before the Time; until the Lord come, who will bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkness, and make manifest the Counsels of all Hearts^c*. And, with respect to ourselves, let us be easy under human Censures, if we have given no Occasion for them; for in that Case, *it is a small Thing to be judged of Man's Judgment^d*: But let us carefully prepare for the divine Sentence, by *perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God^e*; and after all our Care, let us be thoroughly humble: for though *we know nothing by ourselves, yet are we not hereby justified*, if it be through Partiality or Forgetfulness, as possibly it may; *but he that judgeth us, is the Lord^f*.

5. As to the Manner of the Judgment, it will be with the greatest Solemnity and Aw-

^a Matt. x. 26.

^b Eccl. xii. 14.

^c 1 Cor. iv. 5.

^d Ibid. 3.

^e 2 Cor. vii. 1.

^f 1 Cor. iv. 4.

fulness,

fulness, and with the greatest Justice and Equity. *The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven^e, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire^h; and the Trumpet shall soundⁱ, and all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and come forth^k. Then shall he sit upon the Throne of his Glory^l, and the Books shall be opened, and they shall be judged out of those Things, which are written in the Books, according to their Works^m. As many as have sinned without a revealed Law, shall perish without a revealed Law: and as many as have sinned in the Law, whether Jewish or Christian, shall be judged by the Lawⁿ. Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom much is committed, of him will the more be asked^o. He that hath sowed sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which hath sowed bountifully, shall reap also bountifully^p. Whatsoever a Man hath sowed, that shall he also reap^q.*

What Manner of Persons ought we to be

^e 1 Theff. iv. 16.

xv. 52.

^m Rev. xx. 12.

^p 2 Cor. ix. 6.

^h 2 Theff. i. 7, 8.

^k John v. 28, 29.

ⁿ Rom. ii. 12.

^q Gal. vi. 7.

^l 1 Cor.

ⁱ Matt. xxv. 31.

^o Luke xii. 48.

then in all holy Conversation and Godliness: looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Day of God; wherein the Heavens, being on Fire, shall be dissolved, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat? Nevertheless we, according to his Promise, look for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such Things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot, and blameless: grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to him be Glory, both now and for ever. Amen'.

' 2 Peter iii. 11—14, 18.

LECTURE XIII.

C R E E D.

Article VIII. *I believe in the Holy Ghost.*

THE former Articles having expressed the Belief of Christians concerning the two first Persons of the sacred Trinity, the Father and the Son; our Creed proceeds in this to the third Object of our baptismal Faith, the Holy Ghost. And to explain it properly, there will be Need to speak, first, of his Nature: secondly, of his peculiar Office in the Work of our Redemption: thirdly, of the Duties owing to him: fourthly, of the Sins, which we are liable to commit against him.

I. Of the Nature of the Holy Ghost, or Spirit. For *Ghost*, in the ancient Use of our Language, denoted the same Thing,

which Spirit doth now : a Substance different from Body or Matter. Indeed we still use it, in expressing the Departure of the Spirit from the Body, which we call *giving up the Ghost* ; and in speaking of supposed Apparitions of the Spirits of Persons after their Decease. Hence also the Catechism mentions *ghostly Dangers* ; and the Communion Service, *ghostly Counsels* : meaning such Dangers, and such Counsels, as relate to our spiritual Part.

In like Manner, the Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit : concerning whose Nature, we can know, as I told you before concerning that of the Son, only what results from the Discoveries made to us in Scripture. And these, though they enlighten us but in Part, are both credible and sufficient. For it is no Objection against believing what God hath revealed in Relation to any Subject, that many Questions may be asked about what he hath not revealed, to which we can give no Answer. And he will never expect us, in this or any Matter, to apprehend more, than he hath afforded us the Means of apprehending.

prehending. Now the chief Things, revealed in the present Case, are the following.

The Holy Ghost is not merely an Attribute or Power of the Father, but hath a real Sub-
sistence, distinct both from the Father and
the Son. For the New Testament expressly
and repeatedly uses the Word, *he*, concerning
him^a: which is never used in that Manner
of a mere Attribute or Power. It ascribes
to him Will and Understanding^b: it speaks
of him as being sent by the Father, coming
and acting on various Occasions, relative both
to the Son and to others; nay, as shewing
himself in a bodily Shape, like a Dove^c.

Further: The Holy Ghost is, truly and
strictly speaking, God. For the Language
of Scripture concerning him is such, as can-
not belong to any created Being. He is there
called, *the eternal Spirit*^d, *the Lord*^e: said to
quicken, or *give Life*^f; to be every where
present with all good Christians^g; to *search*
all Things, yea, the deep Things of God, even
as the Things of a Man are known by his own
Spirit, which is in him^h. Christ, being con-

^a John xiv. 26. xv. 26. xvi. 13.

Heb. ii. 4. Comp. 1 Cor. xii. 11.

^d Heb. ix. 14.

^g John xiv. 16, 17.

^e 2 Cor. iii. 17.

^h 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

^b Rom. viii. 27.

^c Luke iii. 22.

^f 1 Pet. iii. 18.

ceived by him, became *the Son of God*^l. Christians, by his dwelling in them, become *the Temples of the Holy Ghost*^k, or, as another Place expresses it, *the Temples of God*^l. *Ananias*, by lying to him, *lyed not unto Men, but unto God*^m. He is said to distribute spiritual and miraculous Gifts, *dividing to every Man severally, as he will*ⁿ. *And as the Disciples ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the Work, whereunto I have called them*^o. He is represented by our Saviour, as able fully to supply the Want of his personal Presence with the Apostles^p. And lastly he is joined with the Father and the Son, on equal Terms, both in the Form of Baptism, where his Name and theirs are used alike^q; and in the solemn Form of Blessing; where *the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost* is placed on a Level with *the Love of God, and the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*^r.

These, and many other Scripture Expressions, are surely such, as cannot be used of any Creature: but prove the Spirit, as others,

^l Luke i. 35.

^m Acts v. 3, 4.

^p John xvi. 7.

^k 1 Cor. vi. 19.

ⁿ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

^q Matth. xxviii. 19.

^l 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

^o Acts xiii. 2.

^r 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

already

already mentioned to you, prove the Son, to partake of the same Authority and Perfections, and therefore the same Nature, with the Father. Yet we know, that though in holy Writ Men and Angels are, sometimes on account of their extensive Power, sometimes as Representatives of the Deity, called Gods, yet in literal Propriety of Speech there is but one God, and not either three supreme Beings, or a superior and an inferior Object of Adoration. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord^a. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God: I know not any^b. Before me was no God formed: neither shall there be after me^c. I am the Lord,—and my Glory will I not give to another^d. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve^e.* Since then there is not a Plurality of Gods; and yet the Son and the Spirit are each of them God, no less than the Father: it plainly follows, that they are, in a Manner by us inconceivable, so united to him, that *these three are one^f*; but still, in a Manner equally inconceivable, so distinguished from him, that no one of them is the other.

^a Deut. vi. 4.^b Isa. xlv. 8.^c Isa. xliii. 10.^d Isa. xlii. 8.^e Matth. iv. 10.^f 1 John v. 7.

Now certainly, in general, it is no Contradiction, that Things should be in one Respect the same, and in another different. But the particular and explicit Notion of this Union and this Distinction the Word of God hath not given us. Whether we are capable of apprehending it, we know not: and therefore it is no Wonder in the least, that we are incapable of forming one to ourselves. For indeed we are incapable of forming clear Notions concerning thousands of other Things, which are unspeakably less beyond our Reach. All that we can do therefore is, to use those Expressions in Relation to it, which either Scripture furnishes, or Experience hath found useful to guard against false Apprehensions: for with very imperfect ones we must be content. Thus in speaking of the Difference of the Son and Spirit from the Father and from each other, we say, with our Bible, that the Son *is begotten*, and the Spirit *proceeds*, without pretending to know any further, what these two Words mean, than that each denotes something different from the other; and both something different from Creation out of Nothing.

Nothing. And this Distinction giving Occasion to Scripture to speak of them in somewhat the same Manner, as of different Persons amongst Men: we call them the three Persons of the Trinity: not at all intending by it to say, that the Word, *Person*, suits them in every Respect that it suits us: but only to acknowledge, that as we find them thus spoken of, we doubt not but there is some sufficient Ground for it. And as we find further, that in Point of Rank, the Person of the Father is represented as supreme, the Son as subordinate to him, the Holy Spirit to both; and in Point of Relation to us, Creation is ascribed peculiarly to the first, Redemption to the second, Sanctification to the third; and yet, in some Sense, each of these Things to each: we imitate the Whole of this likewise. Still we are very sensible at the same Time, that many more Doubts and Difficulties may be raised, almost about every Part of the Doctrine, than God, in his unsearchable Wisdom, hath given us Light enough to solve. But we apprehend it is our Duty, to believe with Humility and Simplicity what the Scripture hath taught us;

and to be contentedly ignorant of what it doth not teach us; without indulging Speculations and Conjectures, which will only perplex the Subject more, instead of clearing it. And surely it is our Duty also, to interpret with Candour, and use with prudent Moderation whatever well-meant Phrases the Church of Christ, especially in its earlier Days, hath applied to this Subject; to think, on Matters, which are both so mysterious in their Nature, and so hard to be expressed, with great Charity of other Persons: and for ourselves, to keep close with great Care to so much as is plain and practical. In order to this, I now proceed to lay before you,

II. The peculiar Office of the Spirit in the Work of our Redemption: on Account of which he is called, in our Catechism, *God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth us, and all the elect People of God.* For probably he is called the Holy Spirit so frequently in Scripture, and *the Spirit of Holiness* once^z, not merely as being perfectly holy in himself, which the Father and the Son are also, but

^z Rom. i. 4.

as being the Cause of Holiness in Believers; who are elected by God, to eternal Life, on foreseeing that their Faith will produce Obedience.

To be holy is to be pure from Defilement; but particularly, in this Case, from the Defilement of Iniquity: and being sanctified is being made holy: to which blessed Change in sinful Man, the Spirit of God, we are taught, contributes many Ways.

In Baptism we are *born again of Water and of the Spirit*^a; restored by him to the State of God's Children, and endued with the Principles of a new, that is the Christian, Life. As we grow up, it is through him, that our Understandings are enlightened by the Knowledge of God's Will. He directed the ancient Prophets in what they preached and wrote. For *holy Men of old Time spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*^b: which more especially testified beforehand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glories that should follow^c. Then afterwards, when our Saviour became Man, the Holy Ghost was upon him, and accompanied him through the Whole of his

^a John iii. 3, 5.

^b 2 Pet. i. 21.

^c 1 Pet. i. 11.
Ministra-

Ministration^d: and after his Ascension was communicated more fully than before to his Apostles; to *teach them all Things* needful, and *bring to their Remembrance whatever he had said to them^e*: so that in all their Discourses for the Instruction of Mankind, it was not so much *they who spoke*, as *the Spirit of the Father, that spoke in them^f*. Nor can we doubt, but he afforded them equal Assistance at least in what they wrote for the Use of all future Ages. The same Spirit was also their Comforter under every Suffering: and lastly bore Witness to the Truth of their Doctrine and our Faith, by a Multitude of *Signs and Wonders and supernatural Gifts^g*: by which Means, and the Ministry of their Successors, whom likewise *the Holy Ghost made Overseers over Christ's Flock^h*, the Light of his Gospel hath filled the World, and now shines upon us.

Nor is it outwardly alone, that he reveals and confirms to us divine Truths: but as the blessed *Jesus* promised, that *he should*

^d Matth. iii. 16.

Luke iii. 22. iv. 1.

Acts i. 2. x. 38.

^e John xiv. 26.^f Matth. x. 20.^g Heb. ii. 4.^h Acts xx. 28.

*dwell in his Disciples, and abide with them for ever*¹; so, by his inward Operations, the Credibility of which I shall, God willing, prove to you in its proper Place, he *opens our Hearts*^k to receive the Word of God, influences our Affections to delight in it, and excites our Wills to act conformably to it: for which Reasons good Persons are said to *be led by the Spirit*^l; and all Christian Graces to be *the Fruits of the Spirit*^m. With the Wicked *he strives*ⁿ, till they obstinately harden themselves, and then forsakes them. But those, who yield to his Motions, he *renews*^o, and *strengthens with Might in the inner Man*^p; *helps their Infirmities*, and both directs and animates their Prayers, thus *making*, as it were, *Intercession*^q within them. By this *one Spirit*, being in all Christians, they are united into *one Body*^r, and made to love each other. *By the Holy Ghost also, the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts*^s, teaching us to look upon him, not as an austere Master, but a kind Parent; or, in

¹ John xiv. 16.^k Acts xvi. 14.^l Rom. viii. 14.^m Gal. v. 22.ⁿ Gen. vi. 3.^o Tit. iii. 5.^p Eph.

iii. 16.

^q Rom. viii. 26, 27.^r Eph. iv. 4.^s Rom.

v. 5.

the

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the Language of St. Paul, to cry, *Abba, Father*^t. And thus *the Spirit beareth Witness with our Spirit*, joins with our Consciences to complete the Evidence, *that we are the Sons of God*^u: from whence arises that Joy *in the Holy Ghost*^w, which different Persons have in very different Degrees: and therefore no one should despond, because he feels but little, or at Times perhaps nothing, of it, provided he truly honours and serves God. But to some Persons, on some Occasions, the heavenly Comforter vouchsafes, both strong Assurances of their good State; (*hereby know we, that God abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us*^x;) and such lively Consolations from it, as amount to a Pledge and Foretaste of Happiness to come. Accordingly they are said to be *sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the Earnest of their Inheritance*^y.

But to prevent wicked Persons of enthusiastic Tempers from mistaking, as they often have done, their own groundless Con-

^t Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6.

^w Rom. xiv. 17.

i. 13, 14.

^x 1 John iii. 24.

^u Rom. viii. 16.

^y Eph.

fidence for the inward Testimony of the divine Spirit, they should be carefully reminded, that *by our Fruits we are known^a*, and must know ourselves^a; that *the Fruit of the Spirit is in all Righteousness and Truth^b*, and only good Men are full of the Holy Ghost^c. For into a malicious Soul he will not enter; nor dwell in the Body, that is subject unto Sin. The Holy Spirit of Discipline will flee Deceit; and remove from Thoughts, that are without Understanding; and will not abide, when Unrighteousness cometh in^d.

III. The next Thing proposed was to speak of the Duties owing to the Holy Ghost: which, besides the general one of honouring him suitably to his Nature, as God, are in particular, to be baptized in his Name, as I have already mentioned; to pray for his Graces; for God *giveth Grace unto the humble^e*, and *will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him^f*; to be heartily thankful for all his good Motions, and conscientiously to obey them in every Instance. By this last I

^a Matth. vii. 16.

^c Acts xi. 24.

^f Luke xi. 13.

^a 1 John ii. 3.

^d Wisd. i. 4, 5.

^b Eph. v. 9.

^c James iv. 6.

do not mean, that we should *believe every Spirit*^s; follow every strong Imagination of our own, or Pretence of Light from above in others: but adhere steadily to that Rule of Life, which the Holy Ghost hath directed the Writers of Scripture to teach us, and inwardly prompts and disposes us to observe. For other Inspiration, than this, being now become unnecessary; we have no Reason to expect, but much Reason to distrust it. But especially, if we be urged, under Colour of such Authority, to break any one standing Precept of the Gospel, or add to, or take away from, any single Article of our Creed; *though an Angel from Heaven*^h were to require it, we are not to yield; but keep close to *the Faith and holy Commandment, which were once delivered to the Saints*ⁱ, and shall never be altered.

These then are our Duties to the ever-blessed Spirit. There are likewise mentioned in Scripture,

IV. Sins against him. And one of these, not all, as melancholy Persons are apt to

^s 1 John iv. 1.
Jude, verse 3.

^h Gal. i. 8.

ⁱ 2 Pet. ii. 21.

imagine, but one alone, is said by our Saviour to be unpardonable: which is *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*^k. Now that means only, speaking reproachful Words, deliberately and maliciously, against the Miracles done by the Power of the Holy Ghost, or the supernatural Gifts proceeding from him. And the only Persons, to whom Christ declared, that this should not be forgiven, were those, who had the Testimony of their own Senses for the Reality of these Miracles and Gifts; and notwithstanding the fullest Evidence of their coming from the Spirit of God, obstinately persisted in reviling them, and even ascribed them to the Devil. Now there is a plain Reason, why this Sin, under these Circumstances, must be unpardonable. The Persons, guilty of it, had stood out against all the Means, which Heaven had provided for the Conviction and Conversion of Mankind: none more powerful remained to bring them to Repentance; and, as they could not be forgiven without repenting, there was plainly no Way left for their Recovery.

^k Matth. xii. 31. Mark iii. 28, 29. Luke xii. 10.
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But then it is equally plain, that Persons, who never were Witnesses to any such miraculous Powers; but live, as we do, many Ages after they are ceased; cannot, in this Respect, sin to the same Degree of Guilt, since it is not against the same Degree of Evidence: and that as they, who were guilty of it originally, were Unbelievers in Christ, so indeed no Believer in him, continuing such, can possibly design, whilst his Thoughts and Words are in his own Command, to speak Evil of the Holy Ghost or his mighty Works. Nor therefore can he come under the Condemnation of those, whom the Epistle to the Hebrews describes, as *wilfully doing Despite to the Spirit of Grace*; and of whom it pronounces, that *there remains for them no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a fearful Expectation of Judgment*¹. Believers may indeed rashly and thoughtlessly use profane Words concerning the Holy Ghost: but these, though undoubtedly great Offences, and too likely to make Way for greater still, are very far from the unpardonable Sin. And as for what some good Persons are often ter-

¹ Heb. x. 26—29.

rified about, the wicked Imaginations that come into their Minds, and Expressions that come out of their Mouths, at Times, almost whether they will or not; in Proportion as they are involuntary, they are not criminal in them, be they in their own Nature ever so bad. When therefore poor scrupulous Souls affright themselves about such Things, as these; or when they who have not sinned at all against the Spirit, otherwise than as every ill Action is a Sin against him; or have sinned in a quite different Manner from the Jews in the Gospel, and heartily repented of their Sin; when they apprehend, that notwithstanding this they cannot be pardoned; they intirely mistake their own Case: either through Ignorance, or false Opinions infused into them; or excessive Tendernefs of Mind; or indeed more commonly by Reason of some bodily Disorder, though perhaps unperceived by themselves, which depresses their Spirits, and clouds their Understandings, and requires the Help of Medicine.

Another Sin against the Holy Ghost, mentioned in Scripture, is *lying to him*^m: which

^m Acts v. 3.

means there, asserting Falshoods, being conscious that they were such, to Persons inspired by him with the Knowledge of Mens Hearts, as did *Ananias* and *Sapphira*. But the Offences, which we are in Danger of committing against him, are *resisting*ⁿ and *quenching*^o his good Motions and Influences, and *grieving him*^p by *corrupt Communication*, evil Thoughts or unholy Actions. These Things therefore let us diligently avoid; or, if we have fallen into them, sincerely repent of them: the opposite Duties let us conscientiously practise, and stedfastly persevere in them: for so shall we *commend ourselves to God, and to the Spirit of his Grace; who is able to build us up, and give us an Inheritance amongst them who are sanctified*^q; to which he of his Mercy bring us all, for the Sake of our Redeemer Jesus Christ. Amen.

ⁿ Acts vii. 51.
29, 30.

^o 1 Thess. v. 19
^q Acts xx. 32.

^p Eph. iv.

LECTURE XIV.

C R E E D.

Article IX. *The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.*

THE most ancient Creeds of all went no further than a Declaration of Faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose Name we are baptized. For in this Profession all those other Points of Doctrine were understood to be implied, which it was very soon after found most convenient to express by additional Articles. And the first of these, is that now to be explained: wherein we declare our Belief in *the Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints.*

The Scripture Word, translated, *Church*, originally signifies any regular and orderly Assembly of Persons, called to meet on any
O 3 Occasion.

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Occasion. But in the Bible it signifies, almost always, a religious Assembly. And when used in its largest Sense there, it comprehends the whole Number of good Persons, in every Age: all those, who from the Beginning of the World, under whatever Dispensation of true Religion, have believed in God, and served him, according to the Degree of their Light; and shall in the End of it be gathered together, and rewarded by him, according to the Degree of their Improvement. This is *the general Assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven*, as the Epistle to the Hebrews calls it^a. And since the Salvation of all these is owing to Jesus Christ; the only Name, by which Men can be saved^b, they are all, in that Respect, Members of the Church of Christ, how obscure and imperfect soever their Knowledge of a Saviour may have been. But the Word is usually taken in a narrower Sense. And thus it is sometimes applied to the Jewish Nation: which in the Old Testament is called by a Phrase of just the same Meaning,

^a Heb. xii. 23.^b Acts iv. 12.

the Congregation of the Lord^c, and by *St. Stephen, the Church, which was in the Wilderness*^d. But the Church, more especially meant here in the Creed, is the Christian: which, though in some Respects the same with the Jewish, in others differed from it; which therefore our Saviour, in the Gospel, speaks of himself, as about to *build*^e; and accordingly, immediately after his Ascension, in the Acts of the Apostles, we find it built: that is, we find an Assembly of Believers in Christ, met together at *Jerusalem*, under their proper Teachers and Governors, to worship God, and edify one another, in the Manner, which he appointed.

This was the original Christian Church; small indeed at first: but *the Lord*, we read, *added to the Church daily such as should be saved*^f; till, the Gospel spreading every Way, the Number of Christians, which in the Beginning required no more than one Congregation, was of Necessity divided into several. And henceforward we find many Churches spoken of, at some Times: yet all these many spoken of as one, at others.

^c Numb. xvi. 3, &c.
^d Acts ii. 47.

^e Acts vii. 38.

^f Matth. xvi. 18.

For since they all proceeded from the same Source ; are all, as the Apostle argues, *one Body* ; and are directed by *one Spirit* ; even as they are called in *one Hope of their Calling* ; as they have *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all*^g : so are they, in great Propriety of Speech, though *many*, yet *one in Christ*^h. His Church therefore is the whole Number of those, who believe on him. How much soever they may differ in some Opinions or Practices, yet they are one in all Things essential. How wide soever they may be dispersed throughout the World, they shall at last be *gathered together unto him*ⁱ. We can judge only according to Appearances : and therefore to us all those must be Members of Christ's Church, who make a visible Profession of being Christians. But God sees every secret Thought ; and in his Eye, they alone belong truly to his Church, who truly serve him in *the hidden Man of the Heart*^k : that inward Sincerity, which to human Eyes is invisible. And this invisible true Church of Christ

^g Eph. iv. 4. 5.^h Rom. xii. 5.ⁱ 2 Theff. ii. 1.^k 1 Peter iii. 4.

here in Earth is militant; carrying on a continual War, against the outward Temptations of the World and the Devil, and the inward Struggles of every wrong Inclination: till having faithfully *fought the good Fight*; and really, though not perfectly, *gotten the Victory* in this Life; it shall, in the next, become triumphant, and receive the *Crown of Righteousness*¹.

Such then being the Church of Christ in its different States: let us proceed to consider the two Qualities, ascribed to it in the Creed: that it is *Holy*, and that it is *Catholic*.

To be holy, is to be separate from all Defilement and Impurity, particularly of the moral Kind. Thus God is perfectly holy: Angels and good Men are so in their different Degrees. And because nothing unclean or impure, in any Sense, ought to enter into the Service of God, therefore whatever is set apart from common Use, and dedicated to his Worship, is called holy also. Hence the Places, Times, and Things, that are so employed, have that Name given them.

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 7. Rev. xv. 2.

And

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And the Persons, who attend on his Ministry, are stiled holy on account of their outward Relation to him, whether they are really and inwardly such as they ought, or not. Now in outward Profession, the whole visible Church of Christ is holy: separated and distinguished from the rest of the World, by acknowledging his holy Laws, and using the Means of Holiness, which he hath appointed. But in the inward Sense, and the only one which will avail hereafter, they alone are indeed Members of his holy Church, who, by the Help of these Means, do really improve themselves in Piety and Virtue, becoming *holy in all Manner of Conversation, as he which hath called them, is holy*^m: and such as are truly so here, shall be made completely so hereafter. For *Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of Water; and present it to himself a glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle; but that it should be holy, and without Blemish*ⁿ. Ask your Hearts then; Are you giving your best Dili-

^m 1 Peter i. 15.ⁿ Ephes. v. 25, 26, 27.

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gence to cleanse yourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God^o? For without it no Man shall see the Lord^p.

The Word *Catholic*, applied to the Church in our Creed, is nowhere used in Scripture; but frequently in the early Christian Writers: and it means *universal*, extending to all Mankind. The Jewish Church was not universal, but particular: for it consisted only of one Nation; and their Law permitted Sacrifices only in one Temple; nor could several other Precepts of it be observed in Countries at any considerable Distance from thence; but the Christian consists of every Kindred, Tongue and People^a equally; and offers unto the Name of God in every Place, from the rising of the Sun unto the going down of the same, Incense and a pure Offering^r. The Catholic Church then is the universal Church, spread through the World: and the Catholic Faith is the universal Faith; that Form of Doctrine, which the Apostles delivered^s to the whole

^o 2 Cor. vii. 1.
^r Mal. i. 11.

^p Heb. xii. 14.
^s Rom. vi. 17.

^a Rev. v. 9.

Church,

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Church, and it received. What this Faith was, we may learn from their Writings, contained in the New Testament : and at so great a distance of Time, we can learn it with Certainty no where else. Every Church or Society of Christians, that preserves this Catholic or universal Faith, accompanied with true Charity, is a Part of the Catholic or universal Church : and because the Parts are of the same Nature with the whole, it hath been usual to call every Church singly, which is so qualified, a Catholic Church. And in this Sense, Churches, that differ widely in several Notions and Customs, may, notwithstanding, each of them, be truly Catholic Churches. But the Church of *Rome*, which is one of the most corrupted Parts of the Catholic Church, both in Faith and Love, hath presumed to call itself the whole Catholic Church, the universal Church : which it no more is, than one diseased Limb, though perhaps the larger for being diseased, is the whole Body of a Man. And by attempting to exclude us, they take the direct Way to exclude themselves, unless God impute their uncharitable
Way

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Way of thinking and acting, as we hope he will, to excusable Ignorance and Mistake. The Church of *England* pretends not indeed, absurdly, to be the whole Catholic Church; but is undoubtedly a sound and excellent Member of it. So that we have much better Ground to call ourselves Catholics, than they; were such Names worth disputing about, which they are not: only one would not flatter and harden them, by giving them a Title, which they both claim unjustly, and turn into an Argument against us.

In this *holy Catholic Church* our Creed professes *Belief*. But the Meaning is not, that we engage to believe all Things, without Exception, of which the Majority of the Church, at any Time, shall be persuaded: and much less, what the Rulers of it, or, it may be, a small Part of them, who may please to call themselves the Church, shall at any time require: for then we must believe many plain Falshoods, Uncertainties without Number, and contrary Doctrines, as contrary Parties prevail. Our Church doth indeed believe whatever the first and
best

best Ages of Christianity thought necessary: whatever all the other Churches of the present Age agree in. But this is more, than we declare in the Creed. For there, as believing in God, means only believing that there is a God; and believing in the Resurrection, means only believing that there shall be a Resurrection: so believing in the holy Catholic Church, means only believing that by our Saviour's Appointment there was founded, and through his Mercy shall ever continue, a Society of Persons, of what Nation or Nations is indifferent, who have Faith in his Name, and obey his Laws: not indeed without being deformed and disfigured, by Mixtures both of Sin and Error; but still, without being destroyed by either. For as he hath promised, that *the Gates of Hell*, or of the invisible World, that is, Persecution and Death, *shall not prevail against his Church*; so neither shall any other Power. Nothing shall abolish it: though several Things may obscure and corrupt it. That Sin doth, we see: why then may not Error too? It is certainly not a worse Thing: nor

^t Matth. xvi. 18.

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is our Saviour's Promise a greater Security against the one, than the other. He requires us indeed to *hear the Church*. But in what Case? *If thy Brother trespass against thee*, admonish him privately. This relates then, not to disputed speculative Opinions, but to known practical Transgressions against our Neighbour. *If he neglect* private Admonition, *tell it unto the Church*. Not surely the whole Catholic Church, all over the World: that is impossible: but the particular Church, to which you both belong. Now all Sides allow, that every particular Church is fallible; and therefore to be heard no farther, than it appears to be in the Right. It follows next: And *if he neglect to hear the Church*; if he will not reform his injurious Behaviour on a public Warning, *let him be unto thee as an Heathen Man and a Publican*^a: treat him no longer with the Tenderness and Regard, that is due to a good Christian; but consider him in the same Light with an Infidel Sinner, till he makes Reparation. This Rule therefore by no Means proves the Infallibility, even of the universal Church,

^a Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

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and much less of the *Romish*, which is far from universal; but relates to a Matter intirely different. And it still remains true, that professing to believe in the Holy Catholic Church, is only acknowledging, that Christ hath formed the whole Number of his Followers, under him their Head, into one regular and sacred Body or Society, to last for ever: the Unity and Holiness of which is to be carefully preserved by what the latter Part of this Article specifies,

The Communion of Saints. The Word, *Saints*, is of the same Meaning with the Word *holy*: and therefore comprehends all Christians, in the manner which I have just explained. Having *Communion*, is being intitled to partake of Benefits and Kindnesses, and bound to make suitable Returns for them. And thus Christians, or Saints, have Communion or *Fellowship* with *the Father*, from whom cometh down every good and perfect Gift: with his Son *Jesus Christ**, through whom Forgiveness and Mercy is conveyed to us: with the Holy Ghost, whose sanctifying Graces are conferred on such as duly qualify

* 1 John i. 3. Jam. i. 17.

their Hearts for the Reception of them. And for these Blessings we owe all Thankfulness, and all Duty, in Thought, Word, and Deed. Christians have also Communion with the holy Angels; as these *are ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be Heirs of Salvation*^y. And undoubtedly we ought to think of what they do for us, with an inward Sense of Gratitude and Love. But as we are unacquainted with Particulars, we can make no particular Acknowledgments: nor ought we to make any general ones, by outward Expressions of Respect; since *worshipping God alone* is commanded^z, and *worshipping Angels* condemned^a, in Scripture.

With Respect to those of our own Nature, we are bound so far to hold Communion, even with the worst of Unbelievers, as not only to do them every Kind of Justice, but sincerely to wish, and, if Occasion offer, heartily endeavour their Good, both in Body and Soul. But to all, *who have obtained the like precious Faith with ourselves*^b, we bear a

^y Heb. i. 14.^a Col. ii. 18.^z Matth. iv. 10.^b 2 Pet. i. 1.

still nearer Relation ; as being, in a peculiar Sense, Children of the same Father, Disciples of the same Master, animated by the same Spirit, Members of the same Body. And these Things oblige us to the utmost Care of preserving, by prudent Order and mutual Forbearance, as much Unity in the Church, as possibly we can. Such indeed, as obstinately deny the fundamental Doctrines, or transgress the fundamental Precepts of Christianity, ought to be rejected from Christian Communion. But to renounce communicating with any others, who are willing to admit us to it on lawful Terms, is the Way to cut off ourselves, not them, from the Body of Christ : who yet, we doubt not, will allow those on both Sides to belong to his Church, who, through pardonable Passions or Mistakes, will not allow one another to do so.

And as we should maintain Communion with all proper Persons, we should shew our Disposition to it in all proper Ways : attend on the public Instruction, join in the public Worship, Sacraments and Discipline, which our Lord hath appointed ; and keep the Whole of them pure from all forbidden,

or

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or suspicious Alterations or Mixtures : avoid, with great Care, both giving and taking needless Offence, in Respect to these, or any Matters ; and, by all fit Means, *edify one another in Love*^c : obeying those, who are set over us ; condescending to those, who are beneath us ; esteeming and honouring the wise and virtuous ; teaching and admonishing the ignorant and faulty ; bearing with the weak, relieving the poor, and comforting the afflicted.

Nor have we Communion only with the Saints on Earth : but are of one City, and one Family, with such, as are already got safe to Heaven. Doubtless they exercise that Communion towards us, by loving and praying for their Brethren, whom they have left behind them. And we are to exercise it towards them, not by addressing Petitions to them, which we are neither authorised to offer, nor have any Ground to think they can hear ; but by rejoicing in their Happiness, thanking God for the Grace which he hath bestowed on them, and the Examples which they have left us : holding their Me-

^c Rom. xiv. 19. Eph. iv. 16.

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mories in Honour, imitating their Virtues, and beseeching the Disposer of all Things, that having followed them in Holiness here, we may meet them in Happiness hereafter; and become, in the fullest Sense, *Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God^a: having, with all those that are departed in the true Faith of his holy Name, our perfect Consummation and Bliss, both in Body and Soul, in his eternal and everlasting Glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen^c.*

^a Eph. ii. 19.

^c Burial Office.

LECTURE XV.

C R E E D.

Article X. *The Forgiveness of Sins.*

WE are now come to that Article of the Creed, for which all the preceding ones have been preparing the Way: a Doctrine, of the greatest Comfort to believe, and the utmost Danger to misapprehend. I shall therefore endeavour clearly to explain,

I. The Nature of Sin, its different Kinds, and its Guilt.

II. The Nature and Conditions of the Forgiveness promised to it.

I. The Nature of Sin. Both Men and all other Beings, endued with sufficient Reason, must perceive a Difference between

different Inclinations and Actions, of their own and others : in Consequence of which, they must approve some, as right and good; and disapprove others, as wrong and evil. Now this Distinction, which we are capable of seeing, God must see as much more clearly, as his Understanding is more perfect than ours. Therefore he must entirely love what is good, and utterly hate what is evil; and his Will must be, that all his rational Creatures should practise the former, and avoid the latter. This he makes known to be his Will, in some Degree, to all Men, however ignorant, by natural Conscience; and hath more fully made known to us, by the Revelation of his holy Word : wherein also, besides those Things, which we of ourselves might have known to be fit, he hath signified his Pleasure, that we should observe some further Rules, which he knew to be useful and requisite, though we should otherwise not have discerned it. Now the Will and Pleasure of a Person having Authority, as God hath absolute Authority, is, when sufficiently notified, a Law. Those Laws of his, which human Reason was able

to teach us, are called natural or moral Laws : those, which he hath added to them, are called positive ones. Obedience to both Sorts is our Duty ; Transgression of either is Sin : whether it be by neglecting what the Law commands, which is a Sin of Omission ; or doing what it forbids, which is a Sin of Commission.

Further ; as God hath a Right to give us Laws, he must have a Right to punish us, if we break them. And we all of us feel inwardly, that Sin deserves this Punishment : which Feeling is what we call a Sense of Guilt. Some Sins have more Guilt, that is, deserve greater Punishment, than others : because they are either worse in their own Nature ; or accompanied with Circumstances, that aggravate, instead of alleviating them. Thus if bad Actions, known to be such, are done with previous Deliberation and Contrivance, which are called wilful or presumptuous Sins ; they are very highly criminal. But if we do amiss in some smaller Matter, through Inconsiderateness or other Weakness of Mind, or else through a sudden unforeseen Attack of Temptation ; which

are usually called Sins of Infirmity or Surprise; these, though real, are yet less Offences. And if, lastly, we act wrong through invincible Ignorance, that is, have no Means of knowing better; then the Action is not, strictly speaking, a Fault in us, though it be in itself. But if we might, with a reasonable Attention, have known our Duty, and did not attend; we are justly blameable, even for a careless Ignorance, and full as much for a designed one, as if we had known ever so well.

Another Difference in the Kinds of Sins is this: that though they be only in smaller Instances; yet if Persons take so little Pains to guard against them, that they live in a constant or frequent Practice of them, which are called habitual Sins; the Guilt of these may be full as heavy as that of greater Transgressions, provided they be less common. But if they be great and habitually indulged also; that makes the worst of Cases.

Committing Sin can never be a slight Matter. For it is acting as our own Hearts tell us we ought not. It is likewise, for the

most Part, injuring, one Way or another, our Fellow-creatures : and it is always behaving undutifully and ungratefully to our Creator, who hath sovereign Power over us, and shews continual Goodness to us. We may be sure therefore, that the Punishment, due to the least Sin, is such as will give us Cause to wish from the Bottom of our Souls, that we had never done it. More enormous ones are of worse Desert, according to their Degree. And since Recompences proportionable to them are not, with any Constancy, distributed in this World ; as certainly as God is just, they will in the next ; unless we obtain Forgiveness in the mean Time. And all will be made miserable, as long as they are wicked.

This is the Main of what human Abilities unassisted seem capable of discovering to us concerning Sin and its Consequences ; excepting it be, that as we have a natural Approbation of what is good, so we have, along with it, a natural Proneness to what is evil : an Inconsistence, for which Reason finds it hard, if possible, to account.

But

But here most seasonably Revelation comes in; and teaches, not indeed all that we might wish, but all that we need to know of this whole Matter: that our first Parents were created upright; but soon transgressed a plain and easy Command of God, intended for a Trial of their Obedience: by which they perverted and tainted their Minds; forfeited the Immortality, which God had designed them; brought Diseases and Death on their Bodies; and derived to us the same corrupt Nature and mortal Condition, to which they had reduced themselves. An imperfect Illustration of this lamentable Change, and I give it for no other, we may have from our daily Experience, that wretched Poverty, fatal Distempers, and even vicious Inclinations, often descend from Parents to their Children. Now the sinful Dispositions, which our Origin from our primitive Parents hath produced in us, are called original Sin. And this Transgression of theirs may, very consistently with divine Justice, occasion, as the Scripture shews it hath, our being condemned, as well as they, to temporal Sufferings and Death. For even innocent Creatures
have

have no Right to be exempt from them : and to fallen Creatures they are peculiarly instructive and medicinal. The same Transgression may also, with equal Justice, occasion our being exposed to a more difficult Trial of our Obedience, than we should else have undergone ; indeed than we should be able, by the Strength which remains in us, to support. And thus, were we left to ourselves, we must, in Consequence of the Fall of our first Progenitors, become finally miserable. But God is ready to give us more Strength, if we will ask it : and he may undoubtedly subject us to any Difficulties that he pleases, provided he bestows on us, whether naturally or supernaturally, the Power of going through them in the Manner, that he expects from us : which he certainly doth bestow on all Men. And if they use it, they will be accepted by him in a proper Degree : what that is, we are no Judges.

But when, instead of resisting our bad Inclinations, as through the Grace of God we may, we voluntarily follow and indulge them ; then we fall into actual Sin ; and are
in

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in Strictness of Speech guilty, and deserving of Punishment. And this Punishment the Scripture frequently expresses by the Name of Death. For Death being the most terrible to human Nature, of all the Punishments, that Man inflicts; it is used to signify the most terrible, that God inflicts; even those, which extend beyond Death, and are therefore called *the second Death*^a. Accordingly our Saviour directs his Followers: *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body; and after that have no more, that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath Power to cast into Hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him*^b.

The Nature and Duration of the future Sufferings, reserved for Sinners, are most awfully described in the Word of God: the Declarations of which concerning them I shall soon have Occasion to lay before you. But in the mean while we all know them to be such, as may abundantly suffice to engage us in a most serious Inquiry, how

^a Rev. xx. 14. xxi. 8.^b Luke xii. 4, 5.

we shall obtain, what was proposed to be explained.

II. *The Forgiveness of Sins.* Now thus much our own Reason evidently teaches; that when we have done amiss, we are to undo it, as far as we can. We are to disapprove it, and be sorry for it, as we have great Cause; to beg Pardon of God, for having offended him; to make the best Amends we are able to our Fellow-creatures, if we have injured them; to be very humble in our Hearts, and very watchful in our future Conduct. These Things, through God's Help, we can do: and these are all, that Nature directs us to do. Undoubtedly he will never accept less: but the Question is, whether he will so far accept this, as to be reconciled to us upon it. Since Wickedness deserves Punishment, it may be justly punished. Being sorry for it, is not being innocent of it. And the most careful Obedience afterwards no more makes a Compensation for what went before, than avoiding to run into a new Debt pays off the old one: besides that we never obey so well, as not to add continually some Degree of fresh Misbehaviour.

haviour. God indeed is merciful; but he is equally righteous and holy, and abhorrent of Sin. And what can the mere Light of our own Understandings discover to us, with any Assurance, from these Attributes joined? We see, that in this World the most merciful Rulers, if they are just and wise also, which God is, often punish even those Offenders, who repent the most heartily. The Honour and good Order of their Government requires it. And why may not he have Reasons of the same, or even of a different Nature, for doing the same Thing?

Still the Case of Penitents must be more favourable, than that of others. And there is Ground for all such to hope, that such Pity, as can, will be shewn them in some Manner, though they cannot be sure how, or to what Effect. And God hath been pleased to confirm this Hope, from Time to Time, by various Revelations, gradually unfolding his gracious Designs: till, by the coming of our blessed Lord, the whole Purpose of his Goodness was opened; as far as it is proper, that Mortals should be acquainted with it.

From

From these Revelations, contained in the Bible, we learn, that Repentance alone, even the completest, would not be sufficient to reinstate us fully in God's Favour; much less the poor Endeavours towards it, which we of ourselves are capable of using; but that our Pardon and Salvation depend on the compassionate Intercession of a Mediator appointed by our heavenly Father: that a Person, who should deliver Mankind from the bitter Fruits of their Transgressions, had in general been promised, and the Promise been believed, from the earliest Ages; and more particular Notices of him gradually imparted to the successive Generations of the chosen People: that at Length in the Season, which infinite Wisdom saw to be fittest, he appeared on Earth, in the Character of the only begotten Son of God; taught his Followers the Precepts, and set them the Example, of perfect Piety and Virtue; and after bearing cheerfully, for this Purpose, all the Inconveniences of mortal Life, submitted to suffer a cruel Death from wicked Men, provoked by the Perfections, which they ought to have adored: that this voluntary

Sacrifice of himself, the Almighty was pleased to accept from him, whose divine Nature, united to the human, gave it unspeakable Value, as a Reason for entering into a Covenant of Mercy with all those, who should be influenced, by Faith in his Doctrines, to obey his Laws : that still neither our Obedience, nor our Faith itself, is at all meritorious, or in any Degree the Cause of our Acceptance ; for they are both of them God's Gift ; and they are both, through our Fault, very imperfect : but that yet thankful Belief in Christ, as our Saviour from the Power and the Punishment of Sin, *working by Love*^c to our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our Fellow-creatures, is appointed the Condition of our obtaining, and the Instrument of our receiving, Pardon.

The Reasons of this Appointment *we see, as through a Glass darkly*^d : yet enough of them to convince us of its being *the Wisdom of God, though in a Mystery*^e. With Respect to ourselves, it hath the most powerful Tendency to inspire us with Humility, Gratitude

^c Gal, v. 6.^d 1 Cor. xiii. 12.^e 1 Cor. ii. 7.

and Diligence. With Respect to the blessed *Jesus*, it was a fit Reward for what he had done and suffered, to take those into Favour again, for whom he had interested himself with such inexpressible Goodness. And with Respect to God, it was a strong Demonstration of his Concern for the Glory of his Attributes, and the Honour of his Government, that he would not be reconciled to Sinners on any other Terms, than such an Interposition of such a Person in their Behalf: which yet, since he himself provided, as well as accepted, his Kindness to us is no less, than if he pardoned us without it. Thus then did *Mercy and Truth meet together, Righteousness and Peace kiss each other*^f; and God shew himself *just, and yet the Justifier of them which believe in Jesus*^g.

But then we must always remember, that none will be forgiven and made happy by the Means of Christ, but they who are reformed and made holy by his Means: that his Sacrifice is not to stand instead of

^f Psal. lxxxv. 10.

^g Rom. iii. 26.

our Repentance and Amendment; but is the Consideration which induces God first to work in us pious Dispositions, then to accept us, if we cultivate and exert them faithfully.

Perhaps the Benefit of this Sacrifice may extend, in a very valuable, though inferior Degree, even to those who have had little or no Knowledge of Him, who offered it. But in such Questions we have no Concern. Our Business is to take Care that it may extend to us, by embracing, with an active as well as joyful Faith, the gracious Tenders of the Gospel Dispensation.

Indeed the first Advantage, that we have from it, is before we are capable of knowing our Happiness, at the Time of our Baptism. For Baptism restores the Infants of believing Parents, as will be proved hereafter in explaining it, to that Assurance of immortal Life, which our first Parents lost, and we by Consequence. But when administered to Persons of riper Years, as it conveys a further Privilege, the Pardon of their former actual Sins, it also requires a suitable Condition, the Exercise of an actual Faith, such as
will

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will produce future Obedience. And as Infants are baptized only on Presumption of their coming to have this Faith in due Time ; so, if they live, and refuse to be instructed in it, or despise it, their Baptism will avail them Nothing. For it is a Covenant : at first indeed made for us ; but to be afterwards acknowledged and ratified by us, as it is in Confirmation. And in this Covenant we engage, on our Part, to keep ourselves, with an honest Care, free from Sin : and God engages, on his, to consider us, (not because of our Care, though on Condition of it, but for the Sake of Christ,) as free from Guilt ; notwithstanding such Infirmities and Failings as may overtake well-meaning Persons. He will not look on these as Breaches of his Covenant, but readily pass them over ; provided we make a general Confession of them in our daily Prayers, and strive against them with a reasonable Diligence. For such Things we cannot expect to avoid entirely : but greater Offences we may. And therefore, if we fall into any habitual Wickedness, or any single Act of gross and deliberate Sin ; we

forfeit the Happiness, to which our Baptism intitles us: and if we continue impenitent, the more Privileges we have enjoyed, the more severely we shall be punished. For *to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required*^h.

But if God allows us Time; and we make Use of it, not only to be sorry for having lived ill, for this alone is not Gospel Penitence; but to be sorry from a Principle of Conscience; and to shew of what Sort our Sorrow is, by living well afterwards, in all those Respects, in which we have been faulty, we become intitled again to the divine Favour. For though the Scripture declares it *impossible to renew* some Sinners to *Repentance*ⁱ: yet if this be taken strictly, it can mean only *Blasphemers against the Holy Ghost*^k. Besides, *impossible*, in all Languages, often signifies no more than extremely difficult: and *with God all Things are possible*^l. Experience proves, that great Numbers are *renewed to Repentance*: and that they shall not be forgiven, when they repent, is no

^h Luke xii. 48.

ⁱ Heb. vi. 4, 6.

^k Matth. xii. 31.

^l Matth. xix. 26.

where said. It is true, *there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin^m*, no other Method of Salvation, than that, to which they have lost their Claim. But still, if they humbly apply for a fresh Interest in it; since the Apostle directs all Christians to *restore such* to their Communion, as Brethren, *in the Spirit of Meekness*ⁿ; there can be no Doubt, but God will receive them, as a Father, with Pity and Mercy. Indeed the Words of St. *John* alone would be sufficient to banish all Despondency from the Breast of every Christian Penitent. *My little Children, these Things I write unto you, that ye sin not. But if any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our Sins^o.*

You see then the inestimable Goodness of God, in providing Means, by which we not only shall be pardoned, but have the Comfort of knowing beforehand, that we shall. But then you see also the only Terms, on which we are to expect it. And these are, not that we live on in a Circle of sinning and repenting; not that we abstain from some Sins,

^m Heb. x. 26.ⁿ Gal. vi. 1.^o 1 John ii. 1, 2.

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and indulge others : but that we so repent of all our Sins, as not wilfully to sin again. And till we are arrived at this, we must never think ourselves in a safe Condition. For, as on the one Hand, *if the wicked Man turn from his Wickedness, he shall live*^p; so on the other, *if the righteous Man turn from his Righteousness he shall die*^q. *Blessed are they, whose Transgression is forgiven, and whose Sin is covered. Blessed are they, to whom the Lord imputeth not Iniquity, and in whose Spirit there is no Guile*^r.

^p Ezek. xviii. 21, 27. ^q Ibid. 24. ^r Psal. xxxii. 1, 2.

LECTURE XVI.

C R E E D.

Articles XI, XII. Part I. *The Resurrection of the Body, and the Life everlasting.*

THE Resurrection of the Body and Life everlasting being the Consequences of the preceding Article, the Forgiveness of Sins, our Belief of that comfortable Truth leads us naturally to believe these also. And as they complete the Whole of what we are concerned to know ; so here the Profession of our Faith happily concludes, having brought us to the *End of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls* ^a.

But, though this Part of our Creed expresses only two Things ; yet it implies two

^a 1 Peter i. 9.

more : and so comprehends the four following Particulars ;

I. That the Souls of all Men continue after Death.

II. That their Bodies shall at the last Day be raised up, and reunited to them.

III. That both Souls and Bodies of good Persons shall enjoy everlasting Happiness.

IV. That those of the wicked shall undergo everlasting Punishment.

I. That the Souls of all Men continue after Death. We are every one of us capable of perceiving and thinking, judging and resolving, loving and hating, hoping and fearing, rejoicing and grieving. That Part of us, which doth these Things, we call the Mind or Soul. Now plainly this is not the Body. Neither our Limbs, nor our Trunk, nor even our Head, is what understands, and reasons, and wills, and likes or dislikes ; but something, that hath its Abode within the Head ^b, and is unseen. A little Consideration will make any of you sensible of this. Then further : our Bodies

^b In quo igitur loco est (mens) ? Credo equidem in capite : & cur credam, adferre possum. Cic. Tusc. Disp. l. i. c. 29.

increase, from an unconceivable Smallness, to a very large Bulk, and waste away again; and are changing, each Part of them, more or less, every Day. Our Souls, we know, continue all the while the same. Our Limbs may be cut off one after another, and perish: yet the Soul not be impaired by it in the least. All Feeling and Motion may be lost almost throughout the Body, as in the Case of an universal Palsy: yet the Soul have lost Nothing. And though some Diseases do indeed disorder the Mind: there is no Appearance, that any have a Tendency to destroy it. On the contrary, the greatest Disorders of the Understanding are often accompanied with firm Health and Strength of Body: and the most fatal Distempers of the Body are attended, to the very Moment of Death, with all possible Vigour and Liveliness of Understanding. Since therefore these two are plainly different Things; though we knew no further, there would be no Reason to conclude, that one of them dies, because the other doth. But since we do know further, that it can survive so many Changes of the other; this alone

alone affords a fair Probability, that it may survive the great Change of Death. Indeed whatever is once in Being, we are to suppose continues in Being, till the contrary appears. Now the Body, we perceive, becomes at Death insensible, and corrupts. But to imagine the same Thing of the Soul, in which we perceive no Change at that Time, would be almost as groundless, as if having frequently heard the Music of an Organ, but never seen the Person that played on it, we should suppose him dead, on finding the Instrument incapable of playing any more. For the Body is an Instrument adapted to the Soul. The latter is our proper Self: the former is but something joined to us for a Time. And though, during that Time, the Connection is very close; yet nothing hinders, but we may be as well after the Separation of our Soul from our present Body, as we were before, if not better.

Then consider further: When the Body dies, only the present Composition and Frame of it is dissolved, and falls in Pieces: not the least single Particle, of all that
make

make it up, returns to Nothing ; or can do, unless God, who gave it Being, thinks fit to take that Being away. Now we have no Reason to imagine the Soul made up of Parts, though the Body is. On the contrary, so far as the acutest Reasoners are able to judge, what perceives and wills must be one uncompounded Substance. And not being compounded, it cannot be dissolved, and therefore probably cannot die^c.

God indeed may put an End to it, when he pleases. But since he hath made it of a Nature to last for ever, we cannot well conceive, that he will destroy it after so short a Space, as that of this Life ; especially considering, that he hath planted in our Breasts an earnest Desire of Immortality, and a Horror at the Thought of ceasing to be. It is true, we dread also the Death of our Bodies, and yet we own they must die : but then we believe, that they were not at first intended to die : and that they shall live again wonderfully improved. God hath in no Case given us natural Dispositions and Hopes, which he purposed at the same Time to disappoint : much less, when they are such,

^c See Cic. Tusc. Disp. I, 29,

that

that the wisest and best Men feel the most of them, and are made still wiser and better by them.

Besides, there are plainly in our Souls Capacities for vastly higher Improvements, both in Knowledge and Goodness, than any one arrives at in this Life. The best inclined, and most industrious, undeniably have not near Time enough to become what they could be. And is it likely, that Beings qualified for doing so much should have so little Opportunity for it; and sink into Nothing, without ever attaining their proper Maturity and Perfection? But further: not to urge, that Happiness here is very unequally divided between Persons equally intitled to it; which yet is hard to reconcile with God's impartial Bounty: it hath been already observed, in speaking of the Judgment to come, that though, in general, the Course of Things in this World doth bear witness to God's Love of Virtue, and Hatred of Sin; yet, in Multitudes of particular Cases, Nothing of this Kind appears. Not only good Persons often undergo, in common with others, the largest Shares of Evil

in

in Life; and bad Persons enjoy, in common with others, the highest Degrees of Prosperity in it: but the former are frequently Sufferers, and sometimes even to Death, for the very Sake of their Duty; and the latter gain every Sort of worldly Advantages by the very Means of their Wickedness. Yet evidently there is a Difference between right Behaviour and wrong: and God must see this Difference: and his Will must be, that Mankind should observe it: and accordingly we feel ourselves inwardly bound so to do. Now is it possible, that a Being of perfect Justice and Holiness, of infinite Wisdom and Power, should have ordered Things so, that obeying him and our own Consciences should ever make us miserable, and disobeying them prove beneficial to us, on the Whole? We cannot surely imagine, that he will permit any one such Case to happen. And therefore since in this World such Cases do happen; this World is not our final State: but another will come after it, in which every one shall be recompensed according to his Works. Without this Belief,

lief, Religion and Virtue would often want sufficient Motives: with it they never can: and therefore this Belief is true.

Strongly as these Arguments prove the Doctrine of a Life after Death; yet it receives a considerable Addition of Strength from the universal Agreement of all Mankind in it, with but few Exceptions, from the very Beginning. Of the earliest Ages indeed we have only short Accounts: yet enough to judge, what their Notions of this Point were. What could they be indeed, when they knew, that *Abel*, with whom God declared himself pleased, was murdered by his Brother for that very Reason? Surely his Brother's Hatred did not do him more Harm, than God's Love of him did him Good. That would be thinking lowly indeed of the Almighty. And therefore, since plainly he had not the Benefit of his Piety here, there must be another Place, in which he received it. Again, when *Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him*^d: could this peculiar Favour be only depriving him, before his natural Time, of the En-

^d Gen. v. 24.

joyments of the present State? Must it not be admitting him to those of a future one? When God called himself, in a distinguished Sense, *the God of Abraham* and the Patriarchs, what had they enjoyed in this Life, answerable to so extraordinary a Manner of speaking? Many, in all Likelihood, both equalled and exceeded them in worldly Satisfaction: But *therefore*, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches, *God was not ashamed to be called their God, because he had prepared for them a heavenly City*. When *Jacob* confessed himself a Pilgrim and Stranger on Earth, he plainly declared, as the same Epistle observes, that *he desired a better Country** for his Home. Again, when, mourning for the supposed Death of his Son *Joseph*, he saith, *he will go down to him*: we translate the next Word wrongly, *into the Grave*†, as if he meant to have his Body laid by him: that could not be; for he thought him devoured by wild Beasts: it means, into the invisible State, the State of departed Souls. And in this Sense it is said of several of the Patriarchs, that

* Heb. xi. 13—16.

† Gen. xxxvii. 35.

they

they were gathered unto their People^g, and of all that Generation, which lived with Joshua, that they were gathered unto their Fathers^h.

In the Time of *Moses* we find, that even the Heathens had a strong Notion of another Life. For they had built a superstitious Practice upon it, of seeking to the deadⁱ, and enquiring of them concerning Things to come. A foolish and wicked Custom indeed : but however, it shews the Belief was deeply rooted in them. And though future Recompences were not, directly and expressly, either promised to good Persons, or threatened to bad; in the Law of *Moses* : yet that might be, not because they were unknown, but because God thought them sufficiently known ; and for Reasons of unsearchable Wisdom, did not think proper, that *Moses* should make any considerable Addition to that Knowledge : of which there was the less Occasion, as temporal Rewards and Punishments were more equally administered by Providence amongst the Jews, than any other People. Besides, a Life to

^g Gen. xxv. 8. xxxv. 29. xlix. 29.

ⁱ Deut, xviii. 9—12.

^h Judg. ii. 10.

come is not mentioned in the Laws of our own Nation neither : though we know, they were made by such, as professed firmly to believe it. And the Reason is, partly that national Laws are more immediately designed to procure Men Peace and Prosperity on Earth, than Happiness in Heaven : and partly also, that they propose such Encouragements, as they are able to bestow ; and such Penalties, as they are able to inflict ; which are those of this World only. *Moses* indeed went beyond the Sanctions, which are in Man's Power : and assured the Jews of God's Blessings on their Obedience, and Curses on their Disobedience. But as, in so doing, he spoke, not so much to single Persons considered singly, as to the whole People in a Body ; these Blessings and Curses could be only, what they were, those of the present Life : because the Division of Mankind into Nations will subsist no longer ; and therefore national Good or Evil can be enjoyed or suffered only here. But still, since it is evident, through the Whole of his Law, that the Jews had the most serious Belief of a just Providence ; and also, from the above-

mentioned Proofs, that they believed a future State; surely they must believe in general, that this Providence would be so exerted in that State, as to reward the good, and punish the wicked. More and stronger Evidences of this will be given under the second Particular, *the Resurrection of the Body*.

At present I shall go on to observe further, that not only the Jews, but all the Nations of the World, whether learned or unlearned, whether known in former Times or discovered of later Times, appear to have been persuaded, that the Souls of Men continue after Death. Now this so universal Agreement must surely have arisen from an inward Principle of Nature, dictating to all Persons that they are designed for a future Existence; and that as they are plainly Creatures accountable for their Actions, yet often do not account here, they must expect to do it hereafter. Or should the Notion be supposed to have its Origin from Tradition; that Tradition must have been derived from what God himself had taught the first of Men: else it had never reached to all Men: and it must have found some powerful Confirmation in the Minds and Hearts of Men:

else

else in so great a Length of Time, amidst so many Changes of human Circumstances, it must have been universally worn out and forgotten.

Indeed, before our Saviour's Days, Length of Time, and Folly, and Wickedness, had every where obscured and darkened this great Truth, by fabulous Additions and absurd Alterations : which hindered the good Influence of it on some Persons, and discredited the Belief of it with others. And had there been none of these Obstacles thrown in their Way ; though Reason and Conscience teach the Doctrine of a future State ; yet by the Generality of Men, Reason is little exercised, and Conscience little consulted, in Relation to unwelcome Truths. And though the Old Testament gave some further Intimations of it ; yet these were neither very clear and explicit, nor known by the greatest Part of the World. No Wonder then if their Conclusions, concerning a Matter so intirely out of Sight, were often doubtful, and often false : and thus they were misled in a Subject of the greatest Importance to them of all others. It is

therefore one inestimable Benefit of the Christian Revelation, that our blessed Lord hath thoroughly removed the preceding Uncertainties and Errors; and *brought Life and Immortality to perfect Light through the Gospel*^k: not only confirming by divine Authority whatever had been rationally taught before; but adding, by the same Authority, several interesting Particulars, which human Faculties could not discover: and which partly have been mentioned to you, in discoursing on the general Judgment; and partly will be, in what I shall further say under the Heads now proposed.

All that remains to be said under the first is, that neither the full Reward of good Persons deceased is as yet bestowed on them, nor the full Punishment of the wicked as yet inflicted; these Things being to follow the general Resurrection: but that still, since our Saviour describes the Soul of *Lazarus*, as *carried by Angels into Abraham's Bosom*, and there *comforted*^l; since he promised the penitent Thief, *that he should be that Day with him in Paradise*^m; and St.

^k 2 Tim. i. 10.

^l Luke xvi. 22, 25.

^m Luke xxiii. 43.

Paul speaks of being present with Christ, as the immediate Consequence of Death, and far betterⁿ than this Life: therefore the State of those, who die in the Lord, is now a State, not of Insensibility, but Happiness: wherein they are blessed, in resting from their Labours^o; and doubtless rejoice, with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory^p, in the Prospect of that completer Felicity, which the righteous Judge of all will hereafter give them.

For as to the Pretence of a Purgatory, where the greatest Part of good Persons are to suffer grievous temporal Punishments, after Death, for their Sins, though the eternal Punishment is remitted: it hath no Ground in the least. Our Saviour's saying, *that the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven in this World, or that which is to come^q*, is merely saying, it shall not be forgiven at all, but punished both here and hereafter. *The Prison, out of which, he saith, the Person, who agrees not with his Brother, shall not come, till he hath paid the last Farthing^r*; is either a literal Prison of this

ⁿ 2 Cor. v. 8. Phil. i. 23.

^o Rev. xiv. 13.

^p 1 Pet. i. 8.

^q Matth. xii. 31, 32.

^r Matth. v. 26.

World, or the Prison of Hell in the next, out of which the contentious and uncharitable shall never come, for they can never pay the last Farthing. *The Spirits in Prison*, to whom St. Peter saith, *Christ by his Spirit preached*, he saith also, *were the disobedient in the Days of Noah*^{*}, with whom *his Spirit strove*[†], whilst they were on this Earth: and who for their Disobedience were sent, not to Purgatory, but to a worse Confinement. When St. Paul bids Men *take Heed, how they build on the Foundation of Christianity*; adding, that the *Fire shall try every Man's Work*; and *if any Man's Work shall be burnt, he shall suffer Loss; but still shall be saved, yet so as by Fire*[‡]: he means, that Persons must not mix Doctrines of their own Invention with the Gospel of Christ, which in this Instance, amongst others, those of the Church of Rome have done: for when *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming Fire*[§], to judge the World, such Notions will not stand the Trial; they that hold them will be Losers by them; and though still they may be saved, it will be

^{*} 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19, 20.

[†] 1 Cor. iii. 10—15.

[‡] Gen. vi. 3.

[§] 2 Thess. i. 7.

with Difficulty and Danger : as a Person escapes, when his House is burning. When, lastly, many of the ancient Christians prayed for the dead ; besides that they had no Warrant for so doing, it was only for the Completion of their Happiness, whom they apprehended to be already in Paradise : it was for the Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs ; for the blessed Virgin herself : whom they certainly did not think to be in Purgatory. And observe, if they prayed for them, they did not pray to them. Purgatory then is nothing, but an imaginary Place, invented by Men, to give bad Persons Hope, and good Persons Dread of being put into it ; that they may get what they can from both, by pretending to deliver them out of it again. Fear not therefore such vain Terrors. *The Souls of the righteous are in the Hands of the Lord: and there shall no Torment touch them* *.

Those of the wicked, on the contrary, as they are to be hereafter with the Devils, we may justly believe are, like them, now *delivered into Chains of Darknefs, to be reserved unto Judgment* †: and though the worst of their Sufferings shall not begin, till

* Wisd. iii. 1.

† 2 Pet. ii. 4.

the Day of Judgment comes ; yet are they represented by our Saviour, as being, instantly after Death, in a Place, where they are *tormented*^z : and undoubtedly, the Loss of their past Pleasures and Gains, Remorse for their past Follies and Crimes, Despair of Pardon, and the *fearful Looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, which shall devour them*^a ; cannot but make their intermediate State intensely miserable : and what then will their final one be ! God grant, that thinking frequently and seriously of these awful Subjects, *we may know and consider, in this our Day, the Things that belong to our Peace, before they are for ever hid from our Eyes*^b.

^z Luke xvi. 25.^a Heb. x. 27.^b Luke xix. 42.

LECTURE XVII.

C R E E D.

Articles XI, XII.—Part II. *The Resurrection of the Body, and the Life everlasting.*

UNDER the two last Articles of the Creed, as I have already observed to you, are comprehended four Points of Doctrine :

I. That the Souls of all Men continue after Death.

II. That their Bodies shall at the last Day be raised up, and reunited to them.

III. That both Souls and Bodies of good Persons shall enjoy everlasting Happiness.

IV. That those of the wicked shall undergo everlasting Punishment.

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The first of these being the Foundation of all the rest ; I chose to enlarge on the Proof and Explanation of it. Now I proceed to shew,

II. That the Bodies of all Men shall be raised up again, and reunited to their Souls. This Reason alone cannot prove : and accordingly the Heathens were ignorant of it : But it carries with it no Contradiction to Reason in the least. For God is infinite, both in Power and Knowledge : and it is unquestionably as possible to bring together and enliven the scattered Parts of our Body again, as it was to make them out of Nothing, and give them Life, at first. And therefore, since we must acknowledge the original Formation of our Bodies to have been of God, we have abundant Cause to be assured, that he can, after Death, form them anew, whenever he pleases. And that this will be done, was probably implied in that general Promise, made to our first Parents, that *the Seed of the Woman*, our blessed Lord, *should bruise the Serpent's Head*^a; destroy his Power; and consequently take

^a Gen. iii. 15.

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away the Curse, under which he had brought Mankind. For as Part of that Curse consists in the Death of the Body, it cannot be completely taken away, but by the Resurrection of the Body. In After-times, *Abraham*, we find, had so strong a Belief of the Possibility of this Article, that he was willing, on the divine Command, to sacrifice his Son: *reasoning*, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us, *that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead^b*. And indeed he could not have been induced to this, by any other Reasoning. God had promised him, that by his Son *Isaac* he should have a numerous Posterity: and this Promise he firmly believed. Now he must know, it could never be fulfilled, if *Isaac* was to be sacrificed, but by his rising again: and therefore he must be persuaded, that he would rise again for that Purpose. On proceeding somewhat further in the sacred History, we find *Job* expressing himself on this Head, if we at all understand his Words, in very strong Terms: *I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the*

^b Heb. xi. 19.

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latter Day upon the Earth. And though, after my Skin, this Body be destroyed^c; yet in my Flesh shall I see God^d. Again, when *Elijah* was taken up alive into Heaven, this must surely give an Expectation, that the Body, as well as the Soul, was to partake of future Happiness. And when the several Persons, mentioned in the Old Testament, were raised up to Life in this World, it could not but increase the Probability of a general Resurrection in the next. Then in the Book of *Daniel* we have an express Declaration, that a Time should come, when *they, who slept in the Dust of the Earth, should awake: some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame, and everlasting Contempt^e.* And indeed, when those, whom we commonly call the three Children, in the former Part of that Book, tell the King, that even though it were not the Pleasure of God to deliver them from the fiery Furnace, yet *would they not serve his Gods^f*; on what other Principle could they so ra-

^c So, I think, the Original should be translated.

^d Job. xix. 25, 26.

^e Dan. xii. 2.

^f Dan. iii.

17, 18.

tionally,

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tionally, or did they so probably say this, as on that, which the Brethren in the Book of Maccabees explicitly profess? There, one of them, stretching forth his Hands to the Torment, saith, *These I had from Heaven: and for his Laws I despise them; and from him I hope to receive them again.* Another, *It is good, being put to Death by Men, to look for Hope from God, to be raised up again by him.* And lastly, the Mother declares to her Children: *I neither gave you Birth, nor Life; nor was it I, that formed your Members: but doubtless the Creator of the World, who formed the Generation of Man, and found out the Beginning of all Things, will also of his Mercy give you Breath and Life again; as you now regard not yourselves for his Laws Sake^c.* In the later Times indeed of the Jewish Church, not a few denied this Doctrine: but much the greater Number held it; allowing, as St. Paul acquainted Felix, *that there shall be a Resurrection, both of the just and unjust^d.*

^c 2 Macc. vii. 10—23.

^d Acts xxiv. 15.

Yet

Yet still, the full Confirmation of it was reserved for our Saviour to give: who, having in his Life-time raised up three several Persons, as you may read at large in the Evangelists, raised up himself from the dead, in the last Place; to afford us the strongest Demonstration possible, that he both can and will raise us all at the Day of Judgment.

This great Event will doubtless, when it comes to pass, exhibit to the whole Universe an astonishing Evidence of the Power and the Truth of God: who may easily have many Reasons for restoring our Bodies, which we apprehend not; besides those, which in some Measure we do apprehend: that the Soul of Man being originally, and in the State of Innocence, united to a Body, is probably capable of completer Perception and Action, and consequently of higher Degrees of Reward or Punishment, in that State, than a separate one, or at least will be so, with such a Body, as in the next Life shall be allotted to it: and likewise that our Belief of enjoying Happiness, or suffering Misery, in both Parts of our Frame
here-

hereafter, must naturally incline us to preserve the Purity of both here : abstaining, or *cleansing ourselves, from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*¹.

The Truth and Reasonableness of the Doctrine being thus established ; it ought to be no Objection, that several Particulars relating to it exceed our Comprehension. *How the dead are raised*, it is sufficient that God knows ; and by no Means wonderful, that we do not : for we scarce know, how any one Part of the Course of Nature is carried on. And as to the Inquiry, that follows this in *St. Paul, With what Bodies do they come*^k ? we are taught, they shall be so far the same Bodies, that every one shall have properly his own, and be truly the same Person he was before : but so far different, that those of good Persons will be subject to none of the Sufferings, none of the Infirmities, none of the Necessities of this Life. For, to use the same Apostle's Words, *What is sown in Corruption, shall be raised in Incorruption : what is sown in Dishonour, shall*

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

^k 1 Cor. xv. 35.

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*be raised in Glory: what is sown a natural Body, shall be raised a spiritual Body*¹. But the particular Nature of spiritual Bodies, or the Distinction that shall be made in them, between the more eminent in Goodness and their Inferiors, *as one Star differeth from another Star in Glory*^m; these Things we are not qualified, in our present State, to understand. And it is some Degree of Weakness even to ask Questions about them: but would be much greater, to attempt giving Answers. I shall therefore only add, that such of the good, *as are found alive at the coming of the Lord*ⁿ, *shall not sleep, or die, and therefore cannot rise again; but shall be changed*^o into the same Likeness with those who do: as the Scripture hath plainly taught us. But what the Appearance and Condition of the Bodies of wicked Persons will be at the Resurrection, it hath not, I think, afforded us the least Knowledge, further than is implied in the Description of their Punishment, of which I shall treat before I conclude: and let us be so wise, as

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44.
iv. 15.

^o 1 Cor. xv. 51.

^m Ibid. 41.

ⁿ 1 Thess.

to dread the Terrors, that are thus concealed from us.

Concerning the general Judgment, which is to come immediately after the Resurrection, I have spoken under the Article of the Creed, which relates to it: and therefore proceed now to the Consequences of that Judgment, by shewing you,

III. That both the Souls and Bodies of the pious and virtuous will enjoy *everlasting Life*: that is, in their Case, Happiness. For a happy Life being the only one, that is a Blessing: Life in Scripture, very commonly signifies Felicity; and Death, Misery.

Now that good Persons will, sooner or later, be recompensed by a good God, is an undoubted Truth. But then as no one is perfectly good, and many have been very bad: there is Room for much Doubt, who hath a Right to apply this Comfort to himself, and who not. But what Reason might be at a Loss to determine, the Scripture hath cleared up; and intitled all to Pardon and Reward, who truly repent of their Sins;

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and sincerely, though not without Mixtures of human Frailty, obey God, from a Principle of Faith in Christ, and in Reliance on the Grace of the Holy Ghost. Still, after this, Reason unassisted can only guess, of what Nature, of what Degree, of what Duration, this Reward will be. And here once more Revelation interposes, and most happily enlightens us. *For Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit*¹. Not that any exact account is given us, of the Particulars, that shall make up our future Bliss: for in all Probability we are not capable of receiving such a one: our present Faculties are not fitted for it.

But however, in general, our Saviour tells us, we shall be *as the Angels of God in Heaven*². Nay, his beloved Disciple St. John tells us, that, though *it doth not yet appear what we shall be, this we know, that*

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

² Matth. xxii. 30.

when

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*when God shall appear we shall be like him**. Now to be like God implies, in few Words, every Thing desirable, that ever so many Words can express. Further yet, a Voice from Heaven proclaims, in the Revelation, that we shall be free, in that State, from every Thing, that is uneasy: For *God shall wipe away all Tears from our Eyes, and there shall be no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain**. And Multitudes of Scriptures assure us, that we shall enjoy every Thing, that is delightful: for they use the noblest and strongest Images, of all that in this World is great and splendid, and capable of giving the most exalted and most refined Satisfaction, to represent that Happiness figuratively, which cannot be literally described.

*Our vile Bodies shall be fashioned like unto the glorious Body** of our blessed Lord: which, in his temporary Transfiguration here on Earth, *shone as the Sun; and his Raiment*

* 1 John iii. 2.
iii. 21.

* Rev. xxi. 4.

* Phil.

was white as the Light". They shall be freed from all Tendency to Decay or Disorder; and become unwearied Instruments for every excellent Purpose, to that better Part, which they used to *press down*". They shall doubtless also have such Gratifications allotted to them, as will suit, though not their present gross Nature, yet their future spiritual Condition: and be adorned with all the Dignity and Beauty, that ought naturally to accompany absolute Innocence, universal Love, divine Favour, and heavenly Joy.

Then for our Minds, when once *the Spirits of just Men* are *made perfect**, as they shall be, in every Thing worthy and amiable: what Pleasure must we take in meeting again the dear Objects of our former Affections, now become infinitely more deserving of them; in conversing with all the great and good Persons that ever were, concerning the various Scenes of this present World, and the blessed Exchange that we have made of it for a better: in learning from them, and

* Matth. xvii. 2. w Wisd. ix. 15. x Heb. xii. 23.

that

that *innumerable Company of Angels*^y, which minister to God's Will, continually new Instruction, concerning all his Works of Nature, Providence and Grace! What surprising Advances must we make by these Means in most pleasing Knowledge: what rapturous Engagements in mutual Friendship! Nor can it be questioned, but such Employments too, however beyond our Reach to guess at them now, will be assigned to each Person, as shall produce him high Honour, and equal Happiness. But above all Happiness will be that of incessantly seeing and loving God, and feeling that we are beloved by him. Thus *shall we be abundantly satisfied with the Fatness of his House, and made to drink of the River of his Pleasures: for with him is the Fountain of Life*^z, *in his Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at his right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore*^a. Were we to have a Prospect, that our Felicity would end; the more exquisite our Enjoyments were, the more melancholy our Reflections might be. But in the Word

^y Heb. xii. 22.^z Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9.^a Psal. xvi. 11.

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of God we find repeated Assurances, that *the righteous shall go into Life eternal*^b; that *the Inheritance, reserved in Heaven for us, is incorruptible, and fadeth not away*^c. Nay, indeed, as their will always be Room for finite Creatures, to advance without End towards him, who is infinite; and as every Improvement in Perfection must be of itself a fresh Delight, and will certainly be rewarded by our Maker with fresh Bounties, we have Reason to conclude, that our Happiness, far from ever ending, will be continually increasing to all Eternity.

It is true, the greatest, the ablest, the best of us merit no such Blessedness: far from it. But still, what *God only wise*^d hath not thought too much to promise, the meanest and most ignorant may humbly expect. They are as capable, as others, of Love and Duty to him, Good-will to their Fellow-creatures, and moral Government of themselves. Now these are the Things which he values; the true Seeds of future Bliss: and whoever cultivates them faithfully, will be sure to reap

^b Matth. xxv. 46. Rom. ii. 7.

^c 1 Pet. i. 4.

^d Rom. xvi. 27. 1 Tim. i. 17. Jude, verse 25.

their

their Fruit, each in Proportion to his Improvement. And thus every one shall be happy to the Height of his Capacity: neither despising those below him, nor envying those above him. But, though we ought to dwell upon this most delightful and useful Subject, in our Thoughts, much more than we do, we must now turn our Eyes from it to a very different View, set before us.

IV. That the Souls and Bodies of the wicked shall undergo everlasting Punishment.

This, it must be owned, is not explicitly mentioned in the Creed. And God had rather, that we should be moved to obey him by Love, and Hope of his Favour, than by Fear of his Anger. But both Motives are implied in this Article. For though Life in Scripture more especially means Happiness; yet its original Sense is only Continuance in Being, whether happy or miserable: and as the wicked are raised, and judged in order to suffer what they have deserved, so they must live afterwards for the same Purpose.

That Disobedience to God can never end well, is the plainest Truth in the World: for Nothing is hid from his Knowledge, Nothing can escape his Power: he is holy as well as good; besides that Goodness itself requires, the incorrigibly bad to be made Examples, for the Sake of deterring others. Yet lest, after all, they should promise themselves that he will spare them, he hath solemnly and repeatedly declared, that he will not. In this World however, many such come off, to all Appearance, with Impunity; committing much Evil, and enjoying much Good. And they, who are punished, are often but slightly punished; and seldom according to the Degree of their Crimes: for the deliberate and artful Sinners, who are the worst, usually fare best here below. As sure therefore as God is just and true, another State remains, in which all this will be set right.

What Sufferings, in particular, the divine Justice will then inflict on unpardoned Sinners, Reason cannot determine: and Revelation hath given us only general and figurative Descriptions of them; but such De-

scriptions, as are beyond all Things terrible : and I shall lay them before you, not in my own Words, but those of holy Writ. The Judge of all shall say unto them, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels^e. There they shall drink of the Wine of the Wrath of God, which is poured out, without Mixture, into the Cup of his Indignation, and shall be tormented with Fire and Brimstone ; and the Smoke of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no Rest, Day nor Night^f : their Worm shall not die, neither shall their Fire be quenched^g.*

How severe soever these Denunciations may appear to us, assuredly the Threatenings of God will not be vain Terrors. We are partial and incompetent Judges in our own Case : prone to flatter and deceive ourselves. But he knows exactly, what Sin deserves, and what the Honour of his Government requires : from his Declarations therefore we are to learn our Fate. *He hath set before us Life and Death : and whether we*

^e Matth. xxv. 14.

^f Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

^g Isa.

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like, shall be given us^h. If therefore the latter be our wilful Choice, in which we obstinately persist; what Wonder, if we are left to it? For Sin and Misery must and will be Companions for ever. Not that, in any Case, the Anger of God shall prevail over his Justice: but the Degree of each Person's Condemnation shall be so exactly proportioned to that of his Guilt, that when the Eyes of Sinners, which here they endeavour to shut, are opened, as they shall be hereafter, to see what their Deeds have merited; *every Mouth shall be stopped*ⁱ, and *all Flesh be silent before the Lord*^k. For every Circumstance, that can either aggravate or excuse, will be impartially weighed; and *some be accordingly beaten with many Stripes, and some with few*^l. But what the lowest Degree of the Almighty's final Vengeance may amount to, God forbid we should any of us try: for whoever sins, purposely or carelessly, in Hopes of a small Punishment, will for that very Reason deserve a heavy one.

^h Eccclus. xv. 17.ⁱ Luke xii. 47, 48.^k Rom. iii. 19.^l Zech. ii. 15.

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Let us all therefore make the Use that we ought, both of the Terrors and the Mercies of the Lord : awing ourselves by the former from transgressing our Duty, and encouraging ourselves by the latter to the utmost Diligence in performing it : that so we may pass through Life with Comfort, meet Death with Cheerfulness, and having faithfully served God in this World, be eternally and abundantly rewarded by him in the next.

LEC-

LECTURE

1. The first of the three main branches of the subject is the history of the subject.

2. The second of the three main branches of the subject is the theory of the subject.

3. The third of the three main branches of the subject is the practice of the subject.

4. The fourth of the three main branches of the subject is the application of the subject.

5. The fifth of the three main branches of the subject is the development of the subject.

6. The sixth of the three main branches of the subject is the improvement of the subject.

7. The seventh of the three main branches of the subject is the preservation of the subject.

8. The eighth of the three main branches of the subject is the dissemination of the subject.

9. The ninth of the three main branches of the subject is the promotion of the subject.

10. The tenth of the three main branches of the subject is the maintenance of the subject.

LECTURE XVIII.

First Commandment.

THE whole Duty of Man consists in three Points: renouncing what God hath forbidden us, believing what he hath taught us, and doing what he hath required of us: which accordingly are the Things promised in our Name at our Baptism. The two former I have already explained to you. And therefore I proceed at present to the third.

Now the Things, which God requires to be done, are of two Sorts: either such, as have been always the Duty of all Men: or such, as are peculiarly the Duty of Christians. And our Catechism very properly treats of the former Sort first, comprehending

ing them under those ten Commandments, which were delivered by the Creator of the World, on Mount *Sinai*, in a most awful Manner, as you may read in the 19th and 20th Chapters of *Exodus*. For though indeed they were then given to the Jews particularly, yet the Things contained in them are such, as all Mankind from the Beginning were bound to observe^a. And therefore, even under the Mosaic Dispensation, they, and the Tables on which they were engraven, and the Ark in which they were put, were distinguished from the rest of God's Ordinances by a peculiar Regard, as containing the Covenant of the Lord^b. And though the Mosaic Dispensation be now at an End, yet concerning these moral Precepts of it our Saviour declares, that *one jot or one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled*^c. Accordingly we find both him, and his Apostles, quoting these ten Commandments, as Matter of perpetual

^a Decem sermones illi in tabulis nihil novum docent, sed quod oblitteratum fuerat admonent. Novatian. de lib. Judaicis, c. 3.

^b Exod. xxxiv. 28. Deut. iv. 13. ix. 9, 11, 15. Josh. iii. 11. 1 Kings viii. 9, 21. 2 Chr. v. 10. vi. 11.

^c Matth. v. 18.

Obligation to Christians: who are now, as the Jews were formerly, *the Israel of God*^a.

Indeed the whole New Testament, and especially the Sermon of our blessed Lord, on the Mount, instructs us to carry their Obligation farther, that is, to more Points, than either the Jews, a People of gross Understanding and carnal Dispositions, commonly took into Consideration; or their Prophets were commissioned distinctly to represent to them; the Wisdom of God foreseeing, that it would only increase their Guilt: and further indeed, than the Words of the Commandments, if taken strictly, express. But the Reason is, that being visibly intended for a Summray of human Duty, they both may, and must, be understood, by those who are capable of penetrating into the Depth of their Meaning, to imply more than they express. And therefore, to comprehend their full Extent, it will be requisite to observe the following Rules. Where any Sin is forbidden in them, the opposite Duty is implicitly enjoined: and where any Duty is enjoined, the opposite Sin is implicitly

^a Gal. vi. 16.

forbidden.

forbidden. Where the highest Degree of any thing evil is prohibited; whatever is faulty in the same Kind, though in a lower Degree, is by Consequence prohibited. And where one Instance of virtuous Behaviour is commanded, every other, that hath the same Nature, and same Reason for it, is understood to be commanded too. What we are expected to abstain from, we are expected to avoid, as far as we can, all Temptations to it, and Occasions of it: and what we are expected to practise, we are expected to use all fit Means, that may better enable us to practise it. All, that we are bound to do ourselves, we are bound, on fitting Occasions, to exhort and assist others to do, when it belongs to them: and all, that we are bound not to do, we are to tempt Nobody else to do, but keep them back from it, as much as we have Opportunity. The ten Commandments, excepting two that required Enlargement, are delivered in few Words: which brief Manner of speaking hath great Majesty in it. But explaining them according to these Rules; which are natural and rational in themselves, favoured by
ancient

ancient Jewish Writers*, authorized by our blessed Saviour, and certainly designed by the Makers of the Catechism to be used in expounding it: we shall find, that there is no Part of the moral Law, but may be fitly ranked under them: as will appear by what shall be said, in speaking separately on each Commandment.

Before them all, is placed a general Preface: expressing, first, the Authority of him who gave them; *I am the Lord thy God*: secondly, his Goodness to those whom he enjoined to observe them; *who brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the House of Bondage*. Now the Authority of God over us Christians, is as great, as it could be over the Jews. And his Goodness is much greater, in freeing us from the Bondage of Sin, and opening to us the heavenly Land of Promise, than it was in leading them, from Egyptian Slavery, to the

* Χρη δὲ μὴδ' εἶναι ἀγνοεῖν, ὅτι οἱ ἰ λογοὶ κεφαλαια νομῶνται, τῶν ἐν εἰδεί παρ' ὅλην τὴν νομοθεσίαν ἐν ταῖς ἰσοῖς βίβλοις ἀναγεγραμμένων. Philo de Decal. The ten Commandments are אֱמֻנָה הַחֹרָה וְשִׁשִּׁיהָ. Cozri, p. 44. See also there p. 107.

earthly *Canaan*: though indeed this Deliverance, having made so fresh and so strong an Impression on them, was the fittest to be mentioned at that Time.

The ten Commandments being originally written, by the Finger of God himself, on two Tables of Stone; and consisting of two Parts, our Duty to our Maker, and to our Fellow-creatures; which we can never perform as we ought, if we neglect that we owe to ourselves; the four first are usually called Duties of the first Table; the six last, of the second. And our Saviour, in Effect, divides them accordingly, when he reduces them to these: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart; and thy Neighbour, as thyself*^f.

The first Commandment is, *Thou shalt have none other Gods, but me.*

The same Reasons, which prove, that God is, prove that there is but one God. The Imagination of two or more Beings, each perfect and each infinite, is at first Sight groundless. For one such Being is sufficient

^f Matth. xxii. 37, 39.

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to produce and govern every Thing else: and therefore more than one can never be proved by Reason: and yet; if there were more, all Men would surely have had some Way of knowing it: and till we have, we are not to believe it. Indeed we have strong Reasons to believe the contrary. For if there is no Difference between these several supposed Beings, they are but one and the same. And if there is any Difference, one must be less perfect than the other, and therefore imperfect, and therefore not God. Besides, as the whole Course of Nature appears to proceed uniformly under one Direction; there is, without Question, only one Director; not several, thwarting each other.

And what Reason teaches in this Matter, Scripture every where confirms; forbidding us to worship, or believe in, any other Deity, than the one Maker and Ruler of Heaven and Earth; who hath manifested himself to all Men by the Works of his Hands; to the Patriarchs and Jews, by the Revelations, recorded in *Moses* and the Prophets; and finally to Christians, by his Son our Lord:

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who

who, in a Way and Manner to us inconceivable, is one with the Father ; and the Holy Spirit with both : as I have already shewn you, in discoursing on the Creed.

There being then this one only God ; the Commandment before us enjoins,

I. That we have him for our God :

II. That we have no other.

I. That we have him : that is, think so of him, and behave so to him, as his infinite Perfection, and our absolute Dependence on him, require : which general Duty towards God, our Catechism very justly branches out into the following Particulars.

First, that we *believe in him*. *For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is*². The Foundation on which this Belief stands, I have shewn in its proper Place. And the great Thing, in which it consists, is, that we fix firmly in our Minds, recall frequently to our Memories, and imprint deeply upon our Hearts, an awful Persuasion of the Being and Presence, the Power and Justice,

² Heb. xi. 6.

the Holiness and Truth, of this great Lord of all. The Consequence of this will be,

Secondly, That we *fear him*. For such Attributes as these, duly considered, must fill the most innocent Creatures with Reverence and Self-abasement. But sinful and guilty ones, as we know ourselves to have been, have Cause to feel yet stronger Emotions in their Souls from such a Meditation: Apprehensions of his Displeasure, and Sollicitude for his Pardon; leading us naturally to that penitent Care of our Hearts and Lives, on which he hath graciously assured us, that through Faith in Christ *Jesus*, we shall be forgiven. And then, Gratitude for his Mercy will prompt us to the

Third Duty towards him, which our Catechism specifies, that we *love him*: *the Fear of the Lord* being, as the Son of *Sirach* declares, *the Beginning of his Love*^h. For whenever we come to reflect seriously on that Goodness, which hath given us all the Comforts that we enjoy; that Pity which

^h Ecclus. xxv. 12.

offers Pardon, on most equitable Terms, for all the Faults that we have committed; that Grace, which enables us to perform every Duty acceptably; and that infinite Bounty, which rewards our imperfect Performances with eternal Happiness: we cannot but feel ourselves bound to love such a Benefactor, *with all our Heart, and with all our Mind, with all our Soul, and all our Strength*; to rejoice in being under his Government; *make our Boast of him all the Day long*ⁱ; and chuse him for *our Portion for ever*^k. A Mind, thus affected, would be uneasy, without paying the Regard set down in the

Fourth Place, which is, *to worship him*: to acknowledge our Dependance, and pay our Homage to him; both in private, to preserve and improve a Sense of Religion in ourselves; and in public, to support and spread it in the World. The first Part of Worship, mentioned in the Catechism, and the first in a natural Order of Things, is *giving him Thanks*. God originally made and

ⁱ Pſal. xliv. 8.^k Pſal. lxxiii. 26.

fitted all his Creatures for Happiness: if any of them have made themselves miserable, this doth not lessen their Obligation of Thankfulness to him: but his continuing still good, and abounding in Forgiveness and Liberality, increases that Obligation unspeakably. With a grateful Sense of his past Favours is closely connected, *putting our Trust in him* for the Time to come. And justly doth the Catechism require it to be our *whole Trust*. For his Power and Goodness are infinite: those of every Creature may fail us; and all that they can possibly do for us, proceeds ultimately from him. Now a principal Expression of Reliance on God is, petitioning for his Help. For if we *pray in Faith*¹, we shall live so too. And therefore trusting in him, which might have been made a separate Head, is included in this of Worship; and put between the first Part of it, *giving Thanks to him*; and the second, *calling upon him*: according to that of the Psalmist; *O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded*^m. To call upon

¹ James i. 6. v. 15.^m Psal. xxxi. 1.

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God, is to place ourselves in his Presence, and there to beg of him, for ourselves and each other, with unfeigned Humility and Submission, such Assistance in our Duty, such Provision for our Wants, and such Defence against our Enemies, of every Kind, as infinite Wisdom sees fit for us all. After this evident Obligation, follows a

Fifth not less so: *to honour his holy Name and Word*: not presuming even to speak of the great God in a negligent Way; but preserving, in every Expression and Action, that Reverence to him, which is due: paying, not a superstitious, but a decent and respectful Regard, to whatever bears any peculiar Relation to him; his Day, his Church, his Ministers; but especially honouring his holy Word, the Law of our Lives and the Foundation of our Hopes, by a diligent Study and firm Belief of what it teaches; and that universal Obedience to what it commands, which our Catechism reserves for the

Sixth and last, as it is undoubtedly the
greatest,

greatest, Thing: *to serve him truly all the Days of our Life.* Obedience is the End of Faith and Fear; the Proof of Love; the Foundation of Trust; the necessary Qualification, to make Worship and Honour of every Kind, acceptable. This therefore must complete the Whole, that we *walk in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless*^a, not thinking any one so difficult, as to despair of it; or so small, as to despise it; and never be *weary in well-doing: for we shall reap in due Season, if we faint not*^o; and he alone *shall be saved, that endureth to the End*^p. But we must now proceed to observe,

II. That, as this Commandment requires us to acknowledge the one true God; so it forbids us to acknowledge any other.

Both before, and long after the Law of Moses was given, the Generality of the World entertained a Belief, that there were many Gods: a great Number of Beings, superior

^a Luke i. 6.

^o Gal, vi, 9,

^p Matth. xxiv. 13,

to Men, that amongst them governed the World, and were fit Objects of Devotion. To these, as their own Fancy, or the Folly or Fraud of others led them, they ascribed more or less both of Power and Goodness; attributed to several of them the vilest Actions, that could be; supposed them to preside, some over one Nation or City, some over another; worshipped a few or a Multitude of them, just as they pleased; and that with a strange Variety of Ceremonies, absurd and impious, immoral and barbarous. Amidst this Crowd of imaginary Deities, the real one was almost entirely forgotten: false Religion and Irreligion divided the World between them; and Wickedness of every Kind was authorized by both. The Cure for these dreadful Evils must plainly be, restoring the old true Notion of one only God, ruling the World himself: which therefore was the first great Article of the Jewish Faith, as it is of ours.

Christians can hardly in Words profess a Plurality of Gods: but in Reality they do, if they suppose the divine Nature common

to more than one Being; or think our Saviour, or the Holy Spirit, mere Creatures, and yet pay them divine Honours. But besides these, we apprehend the Church of *Rome* to sin against the present Commandment, when they pray to Angels, to the holy Virgin and the Saints, as being able every where to hear them; and having not only temporal Relief, but Grace and Salvation, in their Power to bestow. Nay, were the Plea, which they sometimes make, a true one; that they only pray to them to intercede with God; yet it would be an insufficient one. For there is no Reason to believe, that they have any Knowledge of such Prayers: or if they had, as *there is one God*, so there is *one Mediator between God and Man*⁹. And we have neither Precept, nor Allowance, nor Example, in the whole Bible, of applying to any other, amongst all the absent Inhabitants of the invisible World.

But there are several Ways more, of transgressing this Commandment. If we ascribe

⁹ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

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Things, which befall us, to Fate, or to Chance, or to Nature; and mean any Thing real by these Words, different from that Order, which our Maker's Providence hath appointed; we set up in Effect other Gods, besides him. If we imagine the Influence of Stars, the Power of Spirits, in short any Power whatever, to be independent on him, and capable of doing the least Matter, more than he judges proper to permit that it should; this also is having more Gods than one. If we set up ourselves, or others, above him; and obey, or expect any one else to obey, Man rather than God; here again is in Practice, though not in Speculation, the same Crime. If we love or *trust in uncertain Riches*, more than *the living God*[†]; this is that *Covetousness, which is Idolatry*[‡]. If we pursue unlawful sensual Pleasures, instead of delighting in his Precepts; this is making a *God of our own Belly*[§]. In a Word, if we allow ourselves to practise any Wickedness whatever, we

[†] 1 Tim. vi. 17.

[‡] Col. iii. 5.

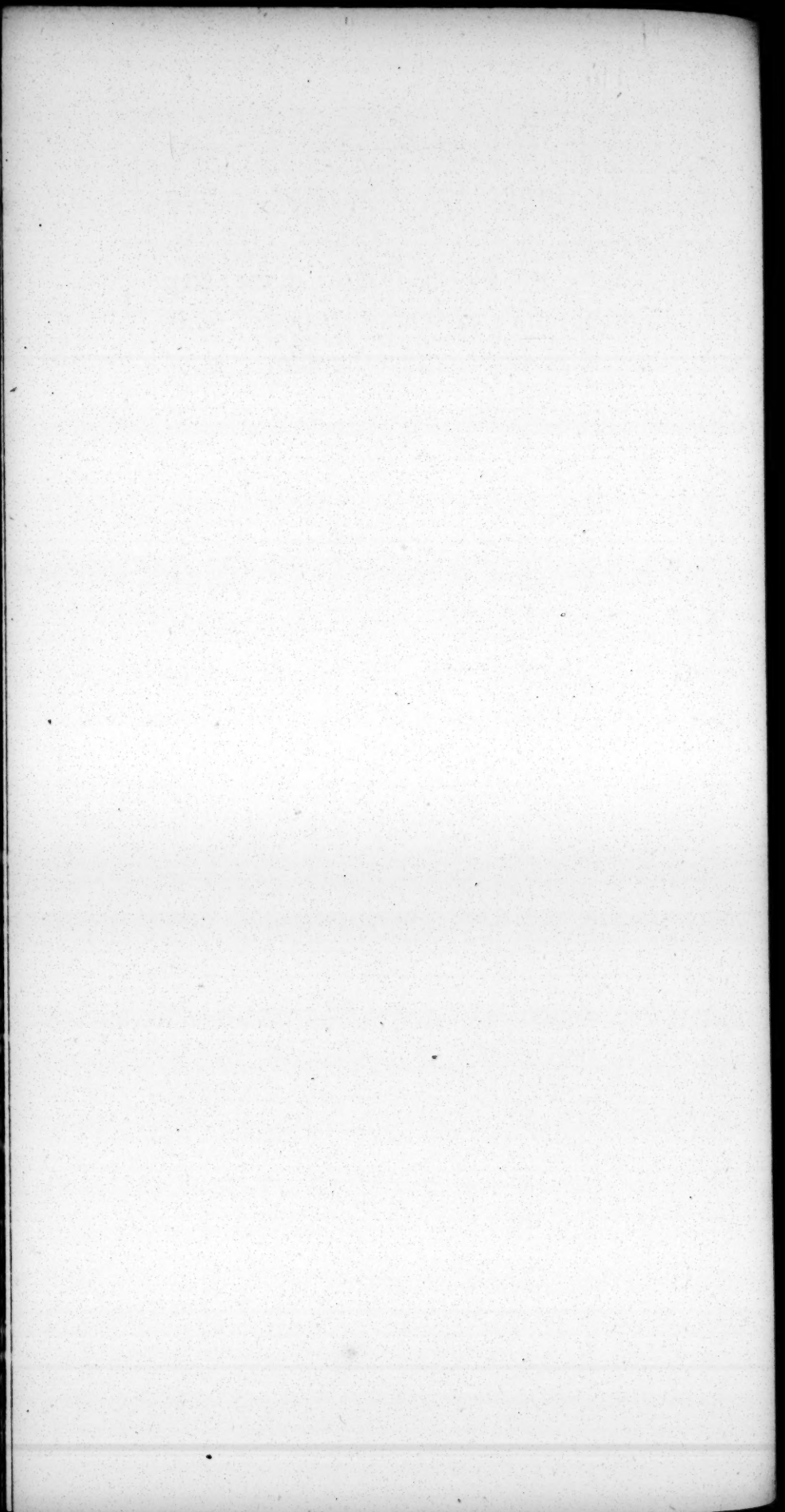
[§] Phil. iii. 19.

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serve, by so doing, the false *God of this World*^a, instead of the true God of Heaven, besides whom we ought not to have any other: and therefore to whom alone be, as is most due, all Honour and Obedience, now and for ever. Amen.

^a 2 Cor. iv. 4.

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LECTURE XIX.

Second Commandment.

WE are now come to the second Commandment: which the Church of *Rome* would persuade Men is only Part of the first. But they plainly relate to different Things. The first appoints, that the Object of our Worship be only the true God: the next, that we worship not him under any visible Resemblance or Form. And besides, if we join these two into one, there will be no tenth left; though the Scripture itself hath called them ten^a: to avoid which Absurdity, the *Romanists* have committed another, by dividing the tenth into two. And they might as well have divided it into six or seven; as I shall shew you, in discouraging upon it. For these Reasons, the

^a 2 Exod. xxxiv. 28. Deut. iv. 13. x. 4.

oldest and most considerable, both of the Jewish and Christian Writers, who distinguish the Commandments by their Number, distinguish them in the same Manner, that we do. Perhaps it may seem of small Consequence, how that before us is counted, provided it be not omitted. And we must own, that some Persons before the Rise of Popery, and some Protestants since the Reformation, have, without any ill Design, reckoned it as the Papists do. But what both the former have done by mere Mistake, these last endeavour to defend out of Policy: well knowing, that when once they have got the second to be considered as only a Part of the first, they can much more easily pass it over, as a Part of no great separate Meaning or Importance, than if it were thought a distinct Precept. And accordingly, in some of their small Books of Devotion, they pass it over, and leave it out intirely^b. But it deserves, as I shall now shew you, another Sort of Regard.

^b This they do in the Latin Office of the Virgin, and in some of their English devotional Books. Indeed there they omit likewise all but the first Sentence of our fourth Commandment, and the Promise in our fifth: perhaps to palliate their preceding Omission.

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The Prophet *Isaiab* very justly puts the Question: *To whom will ye liken God? Or what Likeness will ye compare unto him?* He is an invisible Spirit: therefore representing him in a visible Shape, is representing him to be such as he is not. He is every where present: therefore a Figure, confined by its Nature to a particular Place, must incline Persons to a wrong Conception of him. He is the living, wise, and powerful Governor of the World: therefore to express him by a dead Lump of Matter must be doing him Dishonour. We are unable indeed, at best, to speak or think worthily of him: and we cannot well avoid using some of the same Phrases, concerning him and his Actions, which we do concerning the Parts and Motions of our own Bodies. But we can very well avoid making visible Images of him: and the plainest Reason teaches, that we ought to avoid it; because they lower and debase Mens Notions of God; lead the weaker Sort into superstitious and foolish Apprehensions and Practices; and provoke those of better Abilities, from a Con-

^c Isa. xl. 18.

tempt of such childish Representations, to disregard and ridicule the Religion, into which they are adopted.

Therefore, in the early Ages of the World, many of the Heathens themselves had no Images of the Deity. Particularly, the ancient *Persians* had none^d. Nor had the first *Romans*; *Numa*, their second King, having, as the Philosopher *Plutarch*, himself a *Roman* Magistrate, though a *Greek* by Birth, tells us, *forbidden them to represent God in the Form, either of a Man or any other Animal. And accordingly, he saith, they had neither any painted nor engraved Figure of him for 170 Years; but Temples, void of any Image of any Shape: thinking it impious to liken a superior Nature to inferior ones; and impossible to attain the Notion of God otherwise, than by the Understanding*^e. And *Varro*, one of the most learned of their own Authors, after acknowledging, that during more than 170 Years they worshipped the Gods without any visible Representation, added, that *had they never had any, their*

^d Herodot. l. i. §. 131.
Ed. Par. 1624.

^e Plut. in Num. P. 65.

*Religion had been the purer: for which Opinion, amongst other Evidences, he brought that of the Jewish People; and scrupled not to say in Conclusion, that they who first set up Images of the Gods in the several Nations, lessened the Reverence of their Countrymen towards them, and introduced Error concerning them*¹. So much wiser were these Heathen Romans in this Point, than the Christian Romans are now.

But when some of the Eastern Kingdoms had fallen into this Corruption; particularly the *Egyptians*, who claimed the Invention as an Honour², the great Care of God was to preserve or free his own People from it. The Words of this Commandment express that Purpose very strongly: and very clearly forbid not only making and worshipping Representations of false Gods, but any Representation of God at all. And to shew yet more fully, that even those of the true

¹ Aug. de Civ. Dei, l. 4. c. 31. *Dionysius Halicarnassensis* indeed saith, l. 2. c. 15. p. 87: that *Romulus* erected Images. But as he mentions them no otherwise than incidentally, amongst the Provisions made by that Prince for divine Worship, his Assertion is not so much to be regarded; as the two contrary more formal ones. Or we may suppose, that *Numa* took them down.

² Herodot. l. 2. §. 4:

God are prohibited by it, *Moses*, in *Deuteronomy*, immediately after mentioning the Delivery of the ten Commandments, adds with Respect to the second: *Take therefore good Heed unto yourselves: for ye saw no Manner of Similitude, on the Day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the Midst of the Fire: lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you the Similitude of any Figure*^h. And when the Israelites made a golden Calf in the Wilderness, though evidently their Design was to represent by it, not a false Object of Worship, but *the Lord* (in the Original it is *Jehovah*) who brought them out of the Land of Egypt; yet they were charged with it, and punished for it, as a Breach of their Covenant with God: and *Moses* accordingly broke, on that Occasion, the two Tables of the Commandments, which were, on their Part, the Conditions of that Covenantⁱ. Again, in After-times, when the Kings of *Israel* set up the same Representation of the same true God at *Dan* and *Bethel*; the Scripture constantly speaks of it, as the leading Sin, from which all the

^h Deut. iv. 12—15, 16.ⁱ Exod. xxxii.

rest of their Idolatries, and at last their utter Destruction proceeded. For, from worshipping the true God by an Image, they soon came to worship the Images of false Gods too; and from thence fell into all Sorts of Superstition, and all Sorts of Wickedness.

Yet the Church of *Rome* will have it, that we may now very lawfully and commendably practise what the Jews were forbidden. But observe: not only the Jews, but the Heathens also, who never were subject to the Law of *Moses*, are condemned in Scripture for this Mode of Worship. For St. *Paul's* Accusation against them is, that *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; but became vain in their Imaginations; and changed the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image, made like to corruptible Man*^k. And in another Place he argues with the *Athenians* thus. *Forasmuch as we are the Offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto Gold or Silver or Stone, graven by Art and Man's Device. And the Times of this Ignorance God winked at: but*

^k Rom. i. 21, 23.

*now commandeth all Men every where to repent*¹.

Where then is, or can be, the Allowance of that Image Worship in the Bible, for which Multitudes of the Romish Communion are as earnest, as if it was commanded there? Nor is Antiquity more favourable to it, than Scripture. For the primitive Christians abhorred the very Mention of Images: holding even the Trade of making them to be utterly unlawful. And indeed pretending to frame a Likeness of God the Father Almighty, *whom no Man ever hath seen or can see*^m, as some of that Church have done, without any Censure from the Rulers of it, liberal as they are of Censures on other Occasions, is both a palpable and a heinous Breach of this Commandment. For, though we find in the Old Testament, that an Angel hath sometimes appeared, representing his Person, as an Ambassador doth that of his Prince; and though, in a Vision of *the Ancient of Days*, his Garment was white as Snow, and the Hair of his Head like pure Woolⁿ; yet these Things gave the Jews no Right

¹ Acts xvii. 29, 30.

^m 1 Tim. vi. 16.

ⁿ Dan. vii. 9.
then,

then, and therefore can give us none now, to make other, or even the like, Representations of him, contrary to his exprefs Order.

Our bleſſed Saviour indeed exiſted in a human Form. But we have not the leaſt Knowledge of any one Part or Feature of his Perſon. And therefore all Attempts of exhibiting a Likeneſs of him are utterly vain. Beſides, he hath appointed a very different Memorial of himſelf, the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: and we ought to think that a ſufficient one. Theſe others can ſerve no good Purpoſe, but what, by due Meditation, may be attained as well without them. And there is great and evident Danger of Evil in them, from that unhappy Proneneſs of Mankind to fix their Thoughts and Affections on ſenſible Objects, inſtead of raiſing them higher; which if any one doth not feel in himſelf, he muſt however ſee in others. But particularly in this Caſe, long Experience hath given ſad Proof, that from ſetting up Images of our gracious Redeemer, the holy Virgin, and other Saints, to remind Perſons of them and their Virtues, the

World hath run on to pay such imprudent and extravagant Honours to the Figures themselves, as by Degrees have arisen to the grossest Idolatry.

Indeed some of the Popish Writers tell us, that they do not worship their Images. Yet others of them, who have never been condemned for it, say quite the contrary, that they do worship them; and with the very same Degree of Worship, which they pay to the Persons represented by them. Nay, their public authorized Books of Prayers and Ceremonies not only appoint the Crucifix to be adored, but in Form declare, that divine Adoration is due to it. And accordingly they petition it, in so many Words, expressly directed to the very *Wood*, as *their only Hope, to increase the Joy and Grace of the godly, and blot out the Sins of the wicked*°.

But let us suppose them to pay only an inferior Honour to Images, and to worship the holy Trinity and the Saints by them. Having no Ground, or Permission to pray at

° See Dr. Hickes's Collection of controversial Discourses, vol. 1. p. 47.

all to Saints departed, they certainly have none to use Images for enlivening their Prayers. If any Words can forbid the Worship of God, his Son and Spirit by Images, this Commandment forbids it. And if any Excuses or Distinctions will acquit the Papists of transgressing it, the same will acquit the ancient Jews and Heathens also. For if many of the former mean only, that their Adoration should pass through the Image, as it were, to the Person, for whom it was made ; so did many of the Pagans plead, that their Meaning was just the same^p: yet the Scripture accuses them all of Idolatry. And if great Numbers of the Pagans did absolutely pray to the Image itself ; so do great Numbers of the Papists too : and some of their own Writers honestly confess and lament it.

But further: Had they little or no Regard, as they sometimes pretend, to the Image; but only to the Person represented by it:

^p See a remarkable Proof of this produced in an Epistle to Mr. Warburton, concerning the Conformity of Rome, Pagan and Papal : printed for Roberts, 1748, 8vo. p. 21,

why is an Image, of the blessed Virgin suppose, in one Place, so much more frequented, than another in a different Place, and the Prayers made before it thought to have so much more Efficacy?

Upon the Whole, therefore, they plainly appear to be guilty of that Image Worship, which Reason and Scripture condemn. Nor do they so much as alledge either any Command or express Allowance for it. And yet they have pronounced a Curse upon all who reject it.

But let us go on, from the Prohibition, to the Reasons given for it in the Commandment. The first is a very general, but very awful one. *For the Lord thy God is a jealous God*: not jealous for himself, lest he should suffer for the Follies of his Creatures: that cannot be: but jealous for us, for his Spouse the Church; lest our Notions of his Nature and Attributes, and consequently of the Duties which we owe to him, being depraved, and our Minds darkened with superstitious Persuasions, and Fears, and Hopes, we should depart from the Fidelity
which

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which we have vowed to him, and fall into those grievous Immoralities, which St. *Paul*, in the Beginning of his Epistle to the *Romans*, describes as the Consequences of Idolatry^a, and which have been its Consequences in all Times and Places.

The second Reason for this Prohibition is more particular: that God will *visit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third and fourth Generation of them that hate him*. For, observe, worshipping him irrationally, or in a Manner which he hath forbidden, he interprets to be hating him: as it must proceed, wholly or in Part, from a dishonourable Opinion of him, and tend to spread the like Opinion amongst others. Now we are not to understand by this Threatning, that God will ever, on Account of the Sins of Parents, punish Children, in the strict Sense of the Word, *punish*, when they deserve it not^r. But in the Course of Things, established by his Providence, it comes to pass, that the Sins of

^a Rom. i. 21—32.
tion, Cotta in Cic. de Nat. Deor. 1. 3. §. 38. inveighs vehemently,

^r Against this wrong Imagination,

one Person, or one Generation, lead those, who come after, into the same, or other, perhaps greater, Sins; and so bring upon them double Sufferings, partly the Fruits of their Predecessors Faults, partly of their own. And when successive Ages follow one another in Crimes, besides the natural bad Effects of them, which punish them in some Measure, God may justly threaten severer additional Corrections, than he would else inflict for their personal Transgressions¹: both because it may deter Men from propagating Wickedness down to their Posterity; and because if it doth not, inveterate Evils demand a rougher Cure. Accordingly here the Israelites are forewarned, that if they fell into Idolatry, they and their Children would fall, by Means of it, into all Sorts of Abominations: and not only, these would of Course produce many Mischiefs to both, but God would chastise the following Generations with heavier Strokes, for not taking Warning, as they ought to have done, by the Misbehaviour and Suf-

¹ See Sherlock on Providence, p. 382—390.

ferings of the former. Denouncing this Intention beforehand must influence them, if any Thing could : because it must give them a Concern, both for themselves, and their Descendants too ; for whom, next to themselves, if not equally, Men are always interested. And therefore visiting Sins upon them to the third and fourth Generation seems to be mentioned ; because either the Life, or however the Sollicitude, of a Person may be supposed to extend thus far, and seldom further.

This Threatning therefore was not only just, but wise and kind, on the Supposition, which in general it was reasonable to make, that in such Matters Children would imitate their wicked Progenitors. And whenever any did not ; either their Innocence would avert the impending Evils ; or they would be abundantly rewarded in a future Life for what the Sins of others had brought upon them in the present.

But if God hath threatened to punish the Breach of this Precept *to the third and fourth Generation*, he hath promised to
shew

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shew Mercy unto thousands, that is, so long as the World shall endure, to *them that love him and keep his Commandments*. To the Jews he fulfilled this Engagement, as far as they gave him Opportunity, by temporal Blessings. And amongst Christians there is ordinarily a fair Prospect, that a Nation, or a Family, pious and virtuous through successive Ages, will be recompensed with increasing Happiness in every Age: which is a powerful Motive, both for worshipping God in Purity ourselves, and educating those, who are placed under our Care, to do so too. Yet it must be acknowledged, that neither the Rewards foretold, nor the Punishments denounced, in this Commandment, are so constantly distributed on Earth under the Gospel Dispensation, as they were under that of the Law. But still our Maker as certainly requires, as ever he did, since he *is a Spirit, to be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth*^t: and the Inducement to it is abundantly sufficient, that the *Idolaters*, amongst other Sinners,

^t John iv. 24.

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shall have their Part in the Lake, which burneth with Fire and Brimstone". Not that we are to be forward in applying so dreadful a Sentence to the Case of those, whether Christians or others, who, in this or any Respect, offend through such Ignorance or Mistake, as, for ought we can tell, is excusable. May our heavenly *Father forgive them: for they know not what they do*". But we should be very thankful to him for the Light, which he hath caused to shine upon us; and very careful to *walk* in it as becomes the *Children of Light*, having no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness^x.

^u Rev. xxi. 8.
y. 8, 11.

^w Luke xxiii. 34.

^x Ephes.

LECTURE XX.

Third Commandment.

THE first Commandment having provided that we should worship only the one true God; and the second prohibited worshipping him in a Manner so unworthy and dangerous, as by Images; the third proceeds to direct, that we preserve a due Reverence to him in our whole Conversation and Behaviour. *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.* Under these Words are forbidden several Things which differ in their Degrees of Guilt.

1. The first, and highest Offence is, when we swear by the Name of God falsely. For Vanity in Scripture frequently means, something, which is not what it

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would appear. And hence using God's Name *in vain*, or to Vanity, principally signifies, applying it to confirm a Falseness. Doing this deliberately, is one of the most shocking Crimes of which we can be guilty. For taking an Oath is declaring solemnly, that we know ourselves to be in the Presence of God, and him to be Witness of what we speak : it is appealing to him, that our Words express the very Truth of our Hearts ; and renouncing all Title to his Mercy, if they do not. This it is to swear : and think then what it must be, to swear falsely. In other Sins Men endeavour to forget God : but Perjury is daring and braving the Almighty to his very Face ; bidding him take Notice of the Falseness that we utter, and do his worst.

Now of this dreadful Crime we are guilty, if ever we swear, that we do not know or believe what indeed we do ; or that we do know or believe, what indeed we do not : if ever, being upon our Oaths, we mislead those, whom we ought to inform ; and give any other, than the exactest and fairest Account that we can, of any Matter, concerning

which we are examined. Again, if we promise upon Oath to do a Thing, without firmly designing to do it; or if we promise not to do a Thing, without firmly designing to abstain from it: this also is forswearing ourselves. Nay further; provided the Thing, which we promise, be lawful, if we do not ever after take all the Care, that can be reasonably expected, to make our Promise good, we are guilty of Perjury; and of living in it, so long as we live in that Neglect. If indeed a Person hath sworn to do, what he thought he could have done; and it proves afterwards unexpectedly, that he cannot; such a one is chargeable only with Mistake, or Inconsiderateness at most. And if we either promise, or threaten, any Thing, which we cannot lawfully do: making such a Promise is a Sin; but keeping it would be another, perhaps a greater Sin; and therefore it innocently may, and in Conscience ought to be broken. But if we have promised what we may lawfully, but only cannot conveniently, perform; we are by no Means on that Account released from our Engage-

ment : unless either we were unqualified to promise, or were deceived into promising : or the Person to whom we have engaged, voluntarily sets us at Liberty ; or the Circumstances of the Case be plainly and confessedly such, that our Promise was not originally designed to bind us in them.

You see then what is Perjury. And you must see, it is not only the direst and grossest Affront to God ; for which Reason it is forbidden in the first Table of the ten Commandments ; but the most pernicious Injury to our Fellow-creatures ; on which Account you will find it again forbidden in the second Table. If Persons will assert falsely upon Oath ; no one knows what to believe ; no one's Property or Life is safe. And if Persons will promise falsely upon Oath : no one can know whom to trust ; all Security of Government and human Society, all mutual Confidence in Trade and Commerce, in every Relation and Condition, is utterly at an End. With the greatest Reason therefore are perjured Wretches abhorred of all the World. And no Interest of our own, no Kindness or Compassion for other Persons,

Persons, no Turn or Purpose of whatsoever Sort to be served by it, can ever justify our swerving at all from Truth, either in giving Evidence, or entering into Engagements. Nor must we think in such Cases to come off with Equivocations, Evasions, and Quibbles; and imagine it innocent to deceive this Way. On the contrary, the more artful and cunning our Falsehoods are, the more deliberate and mischievous, and therefore the wickeder, they are. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked^a*: and the following are the Declarations of his sacred Word to the upright Man: *Lord, who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle, and rest upon thy holy Hill? He that speaketh the Truth from his Heart, and hath used no Deceit with his Tongue: he that sweareth unto his Neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own Hindrance^b*. But to the perjured: *seeing he despised the Oath, by breaking the Covenant; thus saith the Lord God: As I live, surely mine Oath that he hath despised, and my Covenant that he hath broken, I will recompense it upon his Head^c*.

^a Gal. vi. 7. ^b Psal. xv. 1, 2, 3, 5. ^c Ezek. xvii. 18, 19.

[Let us all stand in Awe of so dreadful a Threatening, and avoid so horrible a Guilt. Particularly at present, let all, who have sworn Allegiance to the King, faithfully *keep it, and that in Regard to the Oath of God*^d. And let those who have not sworn, remember however, that merely claiming the Protection of a Government, implies some Promise of being dutiful to it in Return; and that a successful Rebellion would not only tempt Multitudes of our Fellow-subjects to Perjury, but lay our Country, its Laws and Religion, at the absolute Mercy of a Faith-breaking Church^e.]

One Thing more should be added here; for it cannot well be mentioned too often, that next to false swearing, false speaking and lying, whether in what we assert, or what we promise, is a grievous Sin, and hateful to God and Man. Though we do not call on our Maker to be Witness, yet he is a Witness of whatever we say. And it is presumptuous Wickedness to utter an Untruth in the Presence of *the God of Truth*^f. It is

^d Eccl. viii. 2.

^e This Paragraph was added in the Time of the Rebellion, 1745.

^f Psal. xxxi. 5.

also at the same time very hurtful to other Persons: and very foolish with Respect to ourselves. For they who will lie, to conceal their Faults, or to carry their Ends, are perpetually found out, disappointed and shamed, for the most Part, in a very little while: and then, for ever after, they are distrusted and disbelieved, even when they speak Truth: as indeed who can depend upon such, or who would venture to employ them? Many other Faults may be borne, so long as Honesty and Sincerity last: but a Failure in these cannot be passed over: so just is *Solomon's* Observation; *The Lip of Truth shall be established for ever: but a lying Tongue is but for a Moment* ^s.

2. Another Way of *taking God's Name in vain* is when we swear by it needlessly, though it be not falsely. For this also the Word *in vain* signifies.

One Way of doing so, is by rash and inconsiderate Vows: for a Vow, being a Promise made solemnly to God, partakes of the Nature of an Oath. And there may possibly be sometimes good Reasons for

^s Prov. xii. 19.

entering into this Kind of Engagement. But vowing to do what there is no Use in doing, is trifling with our Creator: making unlawful Vows, is directly telling him, we will disobey him: making such without Necessity, as are difficult to keep, is leading ourselves into Temptation: and indeed making any, without much Thought and prudent Advice first, usually proves an unhappy Snare. One Vow we have all made, and were bound to make, that of our Baptism, which includes every real good Resolution. That therefore let us carefully keep, and frequently ratify; and we shall scarce have Occasion to make any more.

Another very needless, and always sinful, Use of God's Name, is by Oaths in common Discourse. Too many there are, who fill up with them a great Part of their most trifling Conversation: especially, if ever so little Warmth rises in Talk, then they abound in them. Now it is unavoidable, but Persons, who are perpetually swearing, must frequently perjure themselves. But were that otherwise; it is great Irreverence, upon every slight Thing we say, to invoke God for a Witness;

Witness; and mix *his holy and reverend Name*^h with the idlest Things, that come out of our Mouths. And what makes this Practice the more inexcusable is, that we cannot have either any Advantage from it, or any natural Pleasure in it. Sometimes it arises from a Hastiness and Impatience of Temper; which is but increased by giving this Vent to it: whereas it is every one's Wisdom, not to let it break out in any Way, much less in such a Way. But generally it is nothing more than a silly and profane Custom, inconsiderately taken up: and there are the strongest Reasons for laying it down immediately. It will make us disliked and abhorred by good Persons, and scarce recommend us to the very worst. No Person is the sooner believed for his frequent swearing: on the contrary, a modest serious Affirmation is always much more regarded. And if any one's Character is so low, that his Word cannot be taken; he must think of other Methods to retrieve it. For he will not at all mend Matters, by adding his Oath ever so often over. Then if Swearing be

^h Psal. cxi. 9.

affected,

affected, as becoming ; it is certainly quite otherwise, in the highest Degree. The very Phrases used in it, as well as the Occasions, on which they are used, are almost constantly absurd and foolish : and surely Profaneness can never lessen the Folly. Besides, they make the Conversation of Men shocking and hellish. They are acknowledged to be disrespectful to the Company, in which they are used : and if Regard to their earthly Superiors can restrain Persons from swearing ; why should not the Reverence, owing to our heavenly Father, do it much more effectually ? But indeed the Indulgence of this Sin wears off by Degrees all Sense of Religion, and of every Thing that is good.

Justly therefore doth our Saviour direct :
But I say unto you, Swear not at all : neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne ; nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool ; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King : neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, for thou canst not make one Hair white or black. But let your Communication be, Yea, Yea ; Nay,

*Nay, Nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of Evil*¹. That is: avoid, not only the grosser Oaths, but all the silly Refinements and Softenings of them, which Men have contrived, in Hope to make them seem innocent: for, though the Name of God be not expressed, yet if it be implied, by mentioning something related to God, instead of himself; indeed whatever Form is used to disguise it, the Intent is the same; and the Effect will be, bringing a sacred Obligation into Familiarity and Contempt. Keep yourselves therefore, throughout the Whole of your common Conversation, within the Bounds of a plain Affirmation or Denial: for whatever goes beyond these, proceeds from a bad Turn of Mind, and will produce bad Consequences.

If indeed we be required to swear before a Magistrate, or public Officer, for the Discovery of Truth, and the doing of Justice, this is notwithstanding lawful. For our Saviour forbids it only in *our Communication*, our ordinary Discourse: and he himself, our great Pattern, answered upon Oath to

¹ Matth. v. 34, 35, 36.

the high Priest, who *adjured him by the living God*^k. Or though we be not called upon by Law, yet if some other weighty and extraordinary Occasion should oblige us to call our Maker to Witness; as *St. Paul* hath done, in more Places than one of his Epistles; then also we may allowably do it, provided it be always with Sincerity and Reverence. For by Oaths, thus taken, Men are benefited; and the Name of God not profaned, but honoured. But in our daily Talk, and Communication with each other, it is our Saviour's peremptory Precept, *Swear not at all*: a Rule so evidently right and important, that even Heathens have strictly enjoined and followed it, to the Shame of too many, who call themselves Christians.

Together with common swearing should be mentioned another Sin, very near akin to it, and almost always joined with it, that monstrous Custom of cursing; in direct Contradiction to all Humanity, and to the exprefs Words of Scripture, *Bless, and curse not*^l. To wish the heaviest Judgments of

^k Matth. xxvi. 63.

^l Rom. xii. 14.

God, and even eternal Damnation, to a Person, for the slightest Cause, or none at all; to wish the same to ourselves, if some trifling Thing, that we are saying, be not true, which frequently after all is not true; amounts to the most desperate Impiety, if People at all consider what they say. And though they do not, it is even then thoughtlessly treating God, and his Laws, and the awful Sanctions of them, with Contempt: and blotting out of their Minds all serious Regard to Subjects, that will one Day be found most serious Things. *His Delight was in Cursing*, says the Psalmist, *and it shall happen unto him: he loved not Blessing, therefore shall it be far from him*^m.

3. Besides the Offences already mentioned, all indecent and unfit Use of God's Name in our Discourse, though it be not in swearing or cursing, comes within the Prohibition of this Commandment. All irreverent Sayings, and even Thoughts, concerning his Nature and Attributes, his Actions and his Commands, fall under the same Guilt; unless we are tormented with such Thoughts,

^m Psal. cix. 16.

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whether we will or not: for then they are only an Affliction, not a Sin. All Sorts of Talk, ridiculing, misrepresenting, or inveighing against Religion, or whatever is connected with it, incur the like Condemnation. Nay, even Want of Attention in God's Worship, *drawing near to him with our Mouths*, whilst *we remove our Hearts far from him*ⁿ, if it be wilfully or carelessly indulged, makes us chargeable, in its Degree, with the Sin of *taking his Name in vain*.

4. Though we no Way profane his Name ourselves; yet if we intice others to Perjury and Falsehood; or provoke them to rash Oaths and Curses; or give them any needless Temptation to blaspheme God; to speak disrespectfully, or think slightly, of their Maker, or his Laws, natural or revealed: by such Behaviour also we become accessory to the Breach of this Commandment; and rank ourselves with those, whom it expressly declares *God will not hold guiltless*: that is, will not acquit, but severely punish.

ⁿ Isa. xxix, 13.

Let us therefore be watchful to preserve continually such an Awe of the Supreme Being upon our own Minds, and those of all who belong to us, as may on every Occasion effectually influence us to give him the Glory due unto his Name, both in our more solemn Addresses to him, and in our daily Words and Actions. For *God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the Saints; and to be had in Reverence of all them, that are round about him°.*

• Psal. lxxxix. 7.

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LECTURE XXI.



Fourth Commandment.

IF 'the Worship of God were left at large to be performed at any Time, too many would be tempted to defer and postpone it, on one Pretence or another, till at Length it would be performed at no Time. And therefore, though he were to be adored only by each Person separately, and in private, it would be very expedient to fix on some stated returning Seasons for that Purpose. But Reason shews it to be requisite, and the Experience of all Ages proves it to be natural, that as we are social Creatures, we should be social in Religion, as well as other Things, and honour in common our common Maker : that we should unite in giving Thanks to him

for the Blessings of Life ; a very great Part of which we should be incapable of, without uniting : that we should join in praying Forgiveness of the Sins, which we too often join in committing : petition him together for the Mercies, which we have Need of receiving together ; and, by assembling to learn and acknowledge our several Duties, keep alive in one another, as well as ourselves, that constant Regard to Piety and Virtue, on which our Happiness depends, here and hereafter.

Since therefore, on these Accounts, there must be public Worship and Instruction : it is not only expedient, but necessary, that there should be also fixed Times appointed for it by sufficient Authority. And how much and what Time should be devoted to this Purpose, every Society must have determined for themselves, and would have found it hard enough to agree in determining, if God had given no Intimation of his Will in the Case. But happily we are informed, in the History of the Creation, that the Maker of the World, having finished his Work in six Days, (which he could

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as easily have finished in one Moment, had it not been for some valuable Reason, probably of Instruction to us) *blessed the seventh Day, and sanctified it*^a: that is, appointed every Return of it to be religiously kept, as a solemn Memorial, that *of him, and therefore to him, are all Things*^b. It is much the most natural to apprehend, that this Appointment took Place from the Time, when it is mentioned; from the Time, when the Reason of it took Place. And it is no Wonder at all, that, in so short a History, Notice should not be taken of the actual Observation of it before *Moses*: for Notice is not taken of it in 500 Years after *Moses*. Yet we know of a Certainty, that in his Time, at least, it was ordered to be observed, both in this fourth Commandment, and in other Parts of the Law, which direct more particularly the Manner of keeping it.

The Thing, most expressly enjoined the Jews, in each of these Passages, is, resting from all Manner of Work; and not suffering their Families, their Cattle, nor

^a Gen. ii. 3.

^b Rom. xi. 36.

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even the Strangers that lived amongst them, to labour on that Day. And the Reason of this Rest, given in the Commandment, as you have it in the Book of *Exodus*, is, that *the Lord rested on the seventh Day* from his Work of Creation. Not that this, or any Thing, could be a Fatigue to him. For *the Creator of the Ends of the Earth fainteth not, neither is weary*^c. But the Expression means, that having then finished the Formation of the World, he ceased from it; and required Men also to cease from their Labours every seventh Day; in Memory of that fundamental Article of all Religion, that the Heavens and Earth were made, and therefore are governed, by one infinitely wise, powerful, and good Being. And thus was the *Sabbath*, which Word means the Day of Rest, *a Sign*, as the Scripture calls it, *between God and the Children of Israel*^d; a Mark, to distinguish them from all Worshipers of false Deities.

But besides this principal Reason for the Repose of every seventh Day, two others

^c Isa. xl. 28.
12, 20.

^d Exod. xxxi. 13. 17. Ezek. xx.

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are mentioned in the Law: that it might remind them of that Deliverance from heavy Bondage, which God had granted them; *Remember, that thou wast a Servant in the Land of Egypt, and that the Lord brought thee out thence; therefore he commanded thee to keep the Sabbath Day^e:* and likewise that their Servants and Cattle might not be worn out with incessant Toil; *that thine Ox and thine Ass may rest; and the Son of thy Handmaid, and the Stranger, may be refreshed^f.* Such Mercy indeed is little more than common Prudence: but there are in the World Multitudes of hard-hearted Wretches, who would pay small Regard to that Consideration, were they left to their own Liberty.

Now merely abstaining from common Work on this Day, in Obedience to God's Command, for such religious and moral Ends as these, was undoubtedly sanctifying, or keeping it holy. But then we are not to suppose, that the Leisure, thus provided for Men, was to be thrown away just as they pleased, instead of being usefully employed.

^e Deut. v. 15.

^f Exod. xxiii. 12.

God directed the Jews : *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Soul and with all thy Might ; and the Words, which I command thee this Day, shall be in thy Heart ; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children ; and shalt talk of them, when thou sittest in thine House, and when thou walkest by the Way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up* *. Now, as he required them to attend so constantly to these Duties ; he could not but expect, they should attend more especially to them on that Day, when the great Foundation of all Duty, his creating the World, was appointed to be commemorated ; and when they had Nothing to take off their Thoughts from what they owed to God their Maker. There was a peculiar Sacrifice appointed for that Day : there is a peculiar Psalm composed for it, the Ninety-second : and these Things are surely further Intimations to us, that it must have been a Time, peculiarly intended for the offering up of Prayers and Thanksgivings to Heaven.

Few indeed, or none, of God's Laws were

* Deut. vi. 5, 6. 7.

well observed in the Days of the Old Testament. But still, as the Priests and Levites were dispersed through the Jewish Nation, that they might teach the People Religion ; so we read, that in good Times they did teach it accordingly : and when could this be, but on the Sabbath Day ? We see it was the Custom of religious Persons, on that Day, to resort to the Prophets, that were in *Israel* ; doubtless to hear the Word of God from their Mouths ^h. We see public Happiness promised on this Condition, that Men should *honour the Sabbath of the Lord, not doing their own Ways, nor finding their own Pleasure, nor speaking their own Words* ⁱ. We see absolute Ruin threatened for the Profanation of it ^k. We see a Time foretold, when *from one Sabbath to another all Flesh should come to worship before the Lord* ^l. And in Consequence of this, when their Captivity had taught the Jews a stricter Regard to their Duty, *Synagogues*, and Houses of Prayer, were erected *in every City* : where the Maker of all Things was publicly adored, and his Law *read and preached, every Sabbath Day* ^m.

^h 2 Kings iv. 23. ⁱ Isa. lviii. 13, 14. ^k Jer. xvii. 27.
^l Isa. lxvi. 23, ^m Acts xv. 21.

Such was the State of Things, when our Saviour came into the World : whose Religion being intended for all Mankind equally, the Deliverance from Egyptian Bondage, in which the Jews alone were concerned, was mentioned no longer in the divine Laws : but instead of the Commemoration of this, was substituted that of the Redemption of the World, from the Dominion and Punishment of Sin ; which our blessed Redeemer accomplished by his Death, and proved himself to have accomplished by his Resurrection. Accordingly, the first Day of the Week, being the Day of his Resurrection, was appointed, in thankful Remembrance of it, for the Time of public Worship amongst Christians, and therefore is called by St. *John, the Lord's Day* * ; though in common Language it be more usually called Sunday : as it was even before our Saviour's Time, and may be for a better Reason since, because on it Christ, the Sun of Righteousness arose. Accordingly some of the earliest Fathers give it that Name.

And that no one may doubt the Lawfulness of this Change, of the Day ; it plainly

* Rev. i. 10.

appears, from several Passages of St. *Paul*, that we are not bound to observe the Day of the Jewish Sabbath : and it still more plainly appears, in the Scripture History of the Apostles, that they did observe, and direct the Observation of our present Christian Sabbath ; as the whole Church hath constantly done since, from their Times to this, though it doth not appear, that they called it the Sabbath Day for many hundreds of Years. One Day in seven being still kept, the Memory of the Creation is as well preserved, and the Intent of this Commandment as fully answered, as before : and that one Day in seven being chosen, on which our Saviour rose again, the Memory of the Redemption wrought by him, and called in Scripture *a new Creation*°, is, in the properest Manner, as well as with the greatest Reason, perpetuated, along with the former.

The Day then being thus fixed, which we ought to keep holy ; it remains to consider, how it ought to be kept. And

1. It must be a Day of Rest, in order to commemorate God's *resting*, as the Scripture expresses it, *from all his Work, which he*

° 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15.

created and made^p; and to allow that Ease and Refreshment, which, with so great Humanity, the Commandment requires should be given, not only to Servants, but to the very Cattle. Besides, it cannot be a Day of Religion to Mankind, without such Vacation from the ordinary Labours of Life, as may give sufficient Leisure to distinguish it by Exercises of Piety. But then, as Christians are not under a Dispensation so rigorous in outward Observances, as that of *Moses*; they are not bound to so strict and scrupulous a Rest, as the Jews were. Though indeed the Jews themselves became, at last, much more scrupulous in this Matter, than they needed; and are accordingly reprov'd by our blessed Saviour: from whom we learn this general Rule, that *the Sabbath was made for Man, not Man for the Sabbath*^q: and therefore all Works of great Necessity, or great Goodness and Mercy, if they cannot be deferred to another Time, be they ever so laborious, may very allowably be done then. Only so far as the public Wisdom of the Laws of the Land hath restrained us, we ought certainly to restrain

^p Gen. ii. 3.^q Mark ii. 27.

ourselves, even from such Things, as, in our private Opinion, we might otherwise think innocent. As to Matters of less Labour; what Propriety, and Decency, and reasonable Convenience require, we surely need not omit. And what Practice of the more religious and considerate Part of those, amongst whom we live, allows, hath without Question no small Title to our favourable Opinion. But the Liberties, taken by thoughtless or profane Persons, are not of any Authority in the least. And the safest general Rule to go by, is to omit whatever may be sinful, and is needless; and neither to require, nor suffer, those who belong to us, to do, on this Day, what we apprehend it unlawful to do ourselves.

2. A reasonable Part of our Day of holy Rest, must be employed in the public Worship of God. This, you have seen, the Jews understood to be requisite on their Sabbath; and the earliest Account, which we have of ours, informs us, that *on the first Day of the Week, the Disciples came together to break Bread*: which means to celebrate the Lord's Supper. That with this was joined *the*

^r Acts xx. 7.

Apostles Doctrine and Prayer, we learn from another Place of the same Book of Scripture'. And that every Lord's Day was dedicated to the public Offices of Piety, the History of the Church fully shews from the Beginning. To strengthen the Obligation of attending on these Offices, the Laws of the Land also enjoin it. And as all Persons need Instruction in their Duty both to God and Man, and the Generality have scarce any other Season for it, than the Leisure of the Sunday: if this most valuable Time be either taken from them, or thrown away by them; they must become ignorant and vicious; and of Consequence miserable in this World and the next. How wicked then, and how unwise, is it, either to throw Contempt on such an Institution, or on frivolous Pretences to neglect improving by it!

3. Besides assembling in the Church on the Lord's Day, every one should employ some reasonable Part of it in the private Exercises of Piety: in thinking over their past Behaviour, confessing their Faults to God, and making prudent Resolutions against them for the future; in praying for the Mer-

cies, which they more especially want, and returning Thanks for the Blessings, with which Providence hath favoured them; in cultivating a Temper of Humanity; in doing Acts of Forgiveness, and setting apart something according to their Ability, for Acts of Charity; (for which last *St. Paul* hath particularly recommended this Time^t :) and in seriously considering at Home, whatever they have heard in God's House. For our public Religion will soon degenerate into an useless Form, unless we preserve and enliven the Spirit of it, by such Means, as these, in private: to which they, above all Persons, are bound on the Lord's Day, who either have little Leisure for them on others, or make little Use of it.

When once Persons have brought themselves to spend so much of the Sunday as is fitting in this Manner; it will then, and not before, be Time for them to ask, how the Remainder of it may be spent. For it is a very bad Sign, to be careless of observing what is commanded; and zealous for extending to the utmost, what at best is only permitted. Over great Strictness however

^t 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

must be avoided. And therefore decent Civility and friendly Conversation may both innocently and usefully have a Place in the vacant Part of our Lord's Day: of which it is really one valuable Benefit, that it gives even the lowest Persons an Opportunity of appearing to each other in the most agreeable Light they can, and thus promotes mutual good Will. Nor is it necessary at all to banish Cheerfulness from our Conversation on this Day; which being a Festival, though a religious one, we should partake of all God's Blessings upon it with joyful Hearts. But then such Instances of Freedom and Levity, in Talk and Behaviour, as would scarce be proper at any Time, are doubly improper at this; and tend very fatally to undo whatever Good the preceding Part of the Day may have done.

And as to the taking further Liberties, of Diversions and Amusements, though they are not in express Words forbidden, for the Desire of them is not supposed, in the Word of God; yet by the Laws both of Church and State they are. And what Need is there for them, or what good Use of them? If Persons are so vehemently set upon these Things

Things, that they are uneasy to be so much as one Day in seven without them; it is high Time, that they should bring themselves to more Moderation, by exercising some Abstinence from them. And if they are at all indifferent about them, surely they should consider, what must be the Effect of introducing and indulging them: what Offence and Uneasiness these Things give the more serious and valuable Part of the World; what Comfort and Countenance to the unthinking and irreligious Part; what a dangerous Example to the lower Part: what Encouragement they afford to Extravagance, and the mad Love of Pleasure: what a Snare they place in the Way of all, that think them unlawful; and yet will thus be tempted, to these Liberties first, and then to others, against their Consciences: and, to add no more, how unhappy they increase the Appearance (which, without them, God knows, would be much too great) of Religion being slighted and disregarded; especially by the upper Part of the World, who should be the great Patterns of it.

And if this be the Case of merely unreasonable Diversions; imprudent and unlawful ones

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ones are still more blameable on this Day: but most of all, that crying Sin of Debauchery and Intemperance, which perverts it from the Service of God to the Service of the Devil; and leads Persons, more directly than almost any Thing else, to utter Destruction of Body and Soul. Therefore let us be careful, first to guard ourselves against these Transgressions, then to keep our Children, Servants, and Dependants from the like, if we make any Conscience of doing well by them, or would have any Prospect of Comfort in them. Nor let us think it sufficient, to restrain them from spending the Day ill; but, to the best of our Power and Understanding, encourage and assist them to spend it well. And God grant, we may all employ in so right a Manner, the few Sabbaths, and few Days, which we have to come on Earth; that we may *enter*, at the Conclusion of them, *into* that eternal Sabbath, *that Rest, which remaineth for the People of God*^u, in Heaven.

^u Heb. iv. 3, 9.

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